

# **Evaluation and Participation**

**– some lessons**

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**Department for Evaluation  
and Internal Audit**



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## SUMMARY

This Approach Paper reviews and synthesizes the experiences of donor agencies with regard to support to participation/participatory development in policy work and through programme and project funding. The review and discussion focus on two main sets of issues: (1) donor/funding agency experience with support to participation; (2) donor/funding agency experience with assessment methodologies for the evaluation of participation, and for participatory evaluation.

Participation/participatory development is fairly new as an explicit policy and programme focus. Although it has its origins in the concept of 'community development' applied to certain kinds of small-scale interventions during the 1960s and 1970s, it has received widespread attention and currency in the 1990s due to an emphasis on project sustainability, institutional development and policy reform since the mid-1980s. Donor agencies and multilateral organizations have supported programmes and projects relevant for participation since the 1970s. However, participation as operational development practice has lagged far behind donor awareness, advocacy, policy declarations and general development rhetoric. Therefore, evaluations explicitly addressing participation are only now beginning to emerge.

A prominent form for donor assistance to participation in the past decade or so has been indirectly through support to local institutional development within large-scale area or integrated rural development programmes. It appears that small-scale, specific interventions or local community projects with social or service objectives comprise the most common form of direct donor assistance to the promotion of participation. Frequently, these are operated by NGOs. In the 1990s, economic reform and policy attention to such development issues as poverty alleviation, gender equality and the enhancement of civil society have stimulated new or increased support to advocacy and other organizations with an empowerment or political agenda. The review shows that also this form of support commonly is directed through donor country and host country NGOs.

Evaluation exercises are designed largely with donor agency management and accountability considerations in mind, and thus continue to rely on conventional evaluation criteria and methods. Despite participation rhetoric, there is little evidence of genuine participation *in* evaluation as an integral part of a participatory process of shared decision-making in and ownership of projects. It is not certain that the LFA-based planning models currently adopted by many donors automatically will remedy this situation in the direction of true partnership in development cooperation between programme providers, donors, beneficiaries and different categories of stakeholders.

A number of positive trends have been noted, however. Among these are increasing emphasis on the importance of participation, especially in policy documents; an increase in the use of participatory techniques in the evaluations

reviewed, e g focus group discussions and key stakeholder interviews; and the development currently of participation guidelines and prescriptions, procedural notes, "tool boxes" and resource materials by some donor agencies and auxiliary or consulting institutions.

To strengthen these trends, participation must be mainstreamed by agencies and their partners. Recommendations for future work thus include the introduction and use of more nuanced methods to foster notions of participatory process throughout development dialogue, planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation. These will involve among other things, the refining of beneficiary and stakeholder designations in specified contexts, clarification of roles and responsibilities of donors, implementors and stakeholders, and the further development by agencies of operational definitions and of skills and tools for the collaborative planning, monitoring and evaluation of participation. Evaluations must be seen and planned as part of a conscious, systematic, ongoing learning process, in which attention is focussed on processual change and development with the help of such indicators as beneficiary/stakeholder group dynamics, the negotiation of differences and conflict, and the nature of local community leadership.

Adopting such a perspective and implementing it in evaluations will require an openness to appropriate changes in development administration, planning and procedures by agencies.

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# EVALUATION AND PARTICIPATION

## An Approach Paper

### 1. Introduction

This Approach Paper has been prepared for the Department of Evaluation and Internal Audit of the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida) by Anders Rudqvist and Prudence Woodford-Berger at the Development Studies Unit, Stockholm University. It has benefitted greatly from the ideas, as well as the annotation and editorial assistance of Hartmut Schneider, OECD Development Centre. The paper comprises part of the current work by the DAC Expert Group on Aid Evaluation (EGE) concerning the evaluation of programmes of support in the areas of Participatory Development and Good Governance (PD&GG).<sup>1</sup>

In the interest of providing an overview of the present situation with regard to evaluation and participation, the purpose of the approach paper is actually a dual one. The first is to review and synthesize experiences of donor agencies as regards support to participation and participatory development through programme and project funding. Such a review should provide a clearer picture than presently is readily available, of commonalities and differences in current evaluation thinking and practice among DAC agencies, not least in light of much new work and insight into issues having a direct bearing on participation such as Women-in-Development/Gender and Development (WID/GAD) and poverty alleviation.

The second objective is to draw out lessons learned on the basis of the review, and to make suggestions regarding strategies and methodological issues to be pursued in future work on evaluation and participation.

The paper essentially represents a kind of indicative, state-of-the-art report as a broad guide to further DAC work. Rather than a "finished product", we consider it to be part of an on-going process of rethinking and dialogue to which all DAC/EGE members contribute. As such, it is thus not exhaustive, and has had to be fairly selective in focus. While the main focus in the paper is - and must be - on donor/funding agency experience with participation as revealed in evaluation reports and other relevant project documents, it is necessary both to situate evaluations within the context of policies and to consider donor/funding agencies' actual use of and experiences with assessment methodologies for the evaluation of participation. Research and other analytical work at *inter alia* the Development Studies Unit, the OECD Development Centre and the World Bank Operations Policy Department on participation and development has also been indispensable to discussions of definitions and conceptual frameworks in the paper.

Work with the approach papers has been coordinated by the Working Group on PD&GG within the DAC Expert Group on Aid Evaluation, in accordance with

institutional principles defined in OECD/DAC Orientations on PD&GG. Participation is one of five thematic areas designated for review and reflection as a result of a survey undertaken to identify topics for PD&GG-related evaluations, studies, and research by EGE members.<sup>2</sup> Results of the survey were subsequently developed into a thematic profile by USAID and the PD&GG Steering Committee for discussion at the October 1993 EGE meeting. Primary audiences for the approach papers are (1) evaluators within the DAC group, (2) senior policy makers and operational managers in DAC Member donor agencies with funding to programmes related to the thematic area of participation, and (3) other donor and host country organizations, NGOs, researchers, etc. in the wider development community working with related issues.

This final report represents an expansion and revision of earlier versions as a result of additional donor and other documents reviewed, as well as of new information relayed to the authors, or disseminated to EGE group members through progress reports and other correspondence.<sup>3</sup> Some of the useful additional donor materials recently received were in progress when the review began in 1994, but were completed during mid-1995. The authors also gratefully acknowledge the helpful comments received from other DAC/EGE donor and other agencies since the October 1995 Meeting, where an earlier revised draft version of the paper was presented. The report is based on a qualitative review of 43 agency evaluation reports, project documents and relevant policy or procedural papers received from 8 bilateral donors. This number corresponds to about 84 per cent of the total number of documents selected by these agencies and submitted for review in response to SIDA's requests for materials. About the same number of analytical documents and publications on participation, some of them from The World Bank or commissioned by bilateral donors, were also perused. These appear in the 'Notes and References' section at the back of the paper.

The paucity of evaluations and other programme or project documentation on participation is due partly to the fact that this topic as an explicit focus is relatively new. Consequently, assessments of programmes or projects in which participation has been more or less an explicit objective or methodological strategy are relatively few and of recent issue. However, in many projects of the 1970s and 1980s, participation was considered important, although defined obtusely or pursued more implicitly, and evaluations from some of these might have been valuable for the review.

The sample of documents represents the work of only a small number of bilateral donor agencies and its size, among other things, means that it does not lend itself to meaningful statistical analysis. Nor did the documents provide conclusive evidence regarding such issues as connections between participation and sustainability, or participation and cost effectiveness. Despite these reservations, however, we have been able to get a fairly good picture of development agencies' collective state of knowledge and intentions with regard to participation and evaluation at this time. Findings include certain positive tendencies and trends that were noted, which we feel will serve well as a basis for future DAC work.

The Approach Paper discusses briefly the relation to and/or overlap of participation with other thematic areas - particularly with the Decentralization and Human Rights themes, but also with those of Legal Systems and Public Sector Management.

In accordance with the Framework for Evaluation of Programmes promoting Participatory Development and Good Governance (November 1993) established by EGE members, the remainder of the approach paper is divided into four main sections. In section 2 (Theme Definition), terminology, concepts and definitions are discussed with respect to participation. A gap is noted between on the one hand, participation as rhetoric and as an element in current development policy discourse, and on the other hand, participation as practice at operational levels. This section also incorporates insights and clarifying conceptual frameworks from relevant research and recent general analytical work on participation with regard to national development processes generally, and to institutional development in particular.

In section 3, a discussion is presented of participation *in* evaluation, and of methods and approaches involved in participatory evaluation.

Section 4 (Review of Documents and Lessons Learned) presents briefly the results of a review of the donor agency documents. The evaluations and project documents are reviewed with respect to the use and/or application of some of the concepts, definitions and indicators of participation discussed in sections 2 and 3. A special focus is on NGOs as potentially important actors and intermediaries for support to and the promotion of popular participation, also in accordance with member agreements reported in the EGE Framework paper. Policy, analytical and donor procedural documents are reviewed in terms of the mandate and respective overall donor environments they appear to provide for addressing participation as an explicit issue in evaluations.

Evaluations of humanitarian aid or emergency relief have been excluded for the time being. However, we feel that in light of current discussions on the need to introduce or strengthen the longer-term development effects of these forms of donor assistance, such evaluations should be reviewed for participation content at a later time. The section is concluded with a tentative synthesis of donor experiences and Lessons Learned from the document review.

In the context of the issues treated in sections 2, 3 and 4, section 5 (Conclusions and Suggestions for Future Work) discusses the implications for future work by the DAC/EGE in developing common or at least comparable frameworks for evaluating participation, for the incorporation of participation in conventional evaluations, and - in light of a marked increase in relevant materials emerging in the past year - for a shift towards participatory evaluation. It proposes what essentially is a rather deductive assessment framework in terms of the analytical dimensions of participation and their implications for evaluation, as well as in terms of what the review of evaluations reveal in terms of operationalizing participation. This section, as do the others, also draws on recent research and

case study materials, as well as on other relevant analytical literature concerning participation in concept and in development experience and practice.<sup>4</sup>

### 1.1 Problems, Limitations and Special Considerations

Problems encountered concerning the documentation materials, differences in donor cultures, and thematic delimitation affect the degree to which any decisive "Lessons Learned" can be formulated, and any firm conclusions can be drawn.

One concerns the state of awareness of and knowledge about evaluation as a key element in development planning processes in general. It became increasingly clear while reviewing the materials that the entire issue of working actively to develop evaluation has only quite recently begun to receive concerted attention. This in itself has meant that evaluators have not been sufficiently aware of the problematics, politics and mechanics of evaluation. The question of *participation* and evaluation is a new or added concern to what is already a dynamic, overall learning process.

The second problem stems from the first, and concerns the fact that there continue to be few evaluations of participation owing to the relative novelty of the issues involved. Participation as a recent issue received renewed impetus from discourses on project sustainability, institutional development and policy reform from the mid-1980s, and from current attention to poverty alleviation, democratization, gender and the environment in development processes and programmes now in the 1990s. This means that evaluations explicitly addressing participation are very few in number, and reports only just now beginning to emerge. However, as the review demonstrates, donors have supported programmes and projects clearly relevant for participation since the 1970s, such as extension and training through local-level associations in integrated (multi-sectoral) rural development programmes. Some of these have actually been points of departure for the creation of project designs more in line with current thinking about participatory development.

The third problem or limitation concerns donor policy statements on participation. Most donors do not have a specific policy for participation or participatory development distinct from policy statements on other themes such as e.g. current development aid generally, rural development, poverty, gender, the environment or institutional development. However, some of the donors whose documents are reviewed have begun to compile or commission prescriptive planning manuals, analytical documents, or procedural instruments and other resource or guidance materials focussed specifically on participation.

Finally, delimiting the theme of 'participation' presents interesting challenges in ways that are likely to be rather different from those featured in the other four themes, embedded as it is - either explicitly or implicitly, and sometimes inextricably so - in aspects of all of them. At the March, 1994 Meetings of the Expert Group and of the PD&GG Steering Committee, the boundaries of the five

themes and possible overlap in the definitions of some of the themes were discussed. It was suggested that for the purposes of this exercise, the approach paper on decentralization would focus mostly on government institutional relationships, while that on participation would look mostly at non-governmental mechanisms (e.g. NGOs, grassroots local organizations) and various forms of group action or association whether "formal" or "informal", as promoters of participatory approaches in which equity or distributional goals are emphasized. Areas of overlap remain, and include e.g. support to district councils or other intermediary public sector organisations, and to village associations through bilateral funding via line ministries. In recognition of this fact, and because we wish to avoid giving the impression that the work of NGOs comprises participation, while the contact or dialogue of sub-national level government or other public sector institutions with stakeholders does not, we have given some attention to participation in context of the latter.

With respect to the boundary between participation and 'human rights' it was suggested that poverty-focused social and economic development activities should be allocated to the participation theme, while the human rights theme would more narrowly focus on civil and political rights, although projects dealing explicitly with 'second generation' social and economic rights could also be included in the human rights theme. A rural development programme for an ethnic minority, for example, would belong to the participation theme, but legal assistance to ethnic minorities to defend land entitlements would be considered as support to human rights. Borderline areas include certain forms of activism and support to democratic reform and the strengthening of civil society through e.g. certain advocacy groups and organizations.

As regards the Legal Systems and Public Sector Management thematic areas, participation is a central element in support to *institutions and institutional capacity-building*, including e.g. leadership and citizenship training for specific groups of particularly disadvantaged people (women, ethnic minorities, inhabitants of poor urban neighbourhoods, etc), which is common for some forms of NGO funding.

Essentially, we might say that problems of delimitation are due partly to the fact that 'participation' does not comprise a separate or fairly distinct development *sector* for donor support or investment, in the same way as the themes of Legal Systems or Civil Society may seem to. Clearly, it does not lend itself easily to artificial thematic boundaries constructed to minimize procedural confusion in the compiling of the Approach papers. Participation is as much an integral component of participatory development (PD) as it is of good governance (GG).

## 2. Concepts and Definitions of Participation

Popular participation or participatory development received new attention as a concept and goal in development assistance in the 1980's. The old concept of "community participation" of course goes back even further to the 1950s and 1960s.<sup>5</sup> Community or popular participation was initially promoted and applied mainly by NGOs and in small-scale projects, but also by multilateral organizations such as FAO, ILO and UNRISD, as well as some bilateral agencies during the 1970s and 1980s. Since the mid-1980s, agencies have put great deal of emphasis on policy reform, not only with regard to economic development but also in terms of institutional development, sustainability and participatory development. Although the promotion of participation in rhetorical or advocacy terms is widespread in policy discussions and public declarations of national development intentions, objectives and strategies, participation as operational *development practice* has lagged far behind general awareness of its benefits and general principles.

The end of the cold war and the transformation of authoritarian regimes and political systems in many of the countries in Africa, Asia and Latin America during the last few years, and the demands of economic reform measures focused renewed attention on participation in the context of political as well as economic development. Popular participation or participatory development has been viewed as one of the ways of strengthening democracy, civil society, decentralization, human rights and the development of forms of good governance. Moreover, current policy emphasis on poverty alleviation has generated discussions on conceptual notions of social development which involves the incorporation of a more people-oriented focus into general and economic development efforts. In the context of economic reform, social development has come to imply an overall concern with the improvement and enhanced sustainability of individual and community livelihoods within an equitable social and political system. In this understanding, social development clearly embodies a major dimension of participatory development.

During the last decade, the challenge of environmental and other social problems has meant that participation is increasingly being recognized also as an essential component of sustainable development strategies. It has also increasingly been recognized that in order implement 'participation' as decreed in policy, it must become more useful and applicable as a management concept and in actual development practice. In other words, it is necessary to define participation in operational terms and with regard to beneficiary and other stakeholder groups and levels in particular social and political contexts. It is also necessary to invest in the acquiring of new agency capabilities and skills, in order to work more effectively with participation.

### 2.1 Levels and Dimensions of Participation

We note the difficulties in definitions of popular participation or participatory development<sup>6</sup>. These concepts imply various analytical dimensions and aspects

that tend to be formulated and interpreted in different ways, in different settings and by different actors, e.g. according to the administrative level involved in a particular development intervention at a specific point in time, the type of assistance, sector and project involved, as well as the numbers and types of beneficiary and other stakeholder categories concerned. Moreover, definitional problems with regard to participation result from the fact that not only conceptual/theoretical, policy and operational dimensions are at issue, but also ideological and moral ones. The significance and outcomes of participation in the practice of development assistance also vary in accordance with such interpretations and conceptualizations.

The various definitions that seem to be applied by actors and agencies, however, may be viewed along a continuum from more far-reaching or profound with respect to empowerment, influence and control on the part of grassroots participants, 'intended beneficiaries' or other key primary and secondary stakeholders, to more conventional conceptions where donors, agencies or project staff still essentially retain decision-making power and control with respect to key project planning and functions. Definitions may also vary with respect to how 'operational' they are in terms of technical or procedural applicability and relevance in actual projects and programmes within specific social, cultural and political development contexts.

One of the earlier definitions is the one adopted by UNRISD's Popular Participation Programme, where popular participation is defined as 'the organised effort to increase control over resources and regulative institutions in given social situations on the part of groups or movements hitherto excluded from such control'.<sup>7</sup> Although rather general, this definition captures the wider meaning of the participation concept and stresses its empowerment, control and decision-making aspects.

The World Bank's Learning Group on Popular Participation defined popular participation as 'a process by which people, especially disadvantaged people, influence decisions that affect them'.<sup>8</sup> It is stressed that the term 'popular' refers not only to the absolute poor but also to a broader range of people who are disadvantaged in terms of wealth, education, ethnic group or gender structures, and that 'participation' connotes influence on development *decisions and project or programme design*, not simply involvement in the implementation or benefits of a development activity. In subsequent World Bank documents, after internal review and discussion, the term 'popular participation' is replaced by the more abstract and general 'participatory development', while 'popular participation', 'poor people' or 'disadvantaged' groups are subsumed under the broader and more inclusive 'user' or 'stakeholder' concept.

According to this modified definition 'participatory development is a process through which stakeholders influence and share control over development initiatives, decisions and resources which affect them'. 'Stakeholders' range from the ultimate programme or project beneficiaries or in a given society or setting, to individuals, groups or institutions with indirect interest or an intermediary role in a

programme or project. 'Key stakeholders' are those intended to be directly affected by a proposed intervention i.e. those who may be expected to benefit or lose from Bank-supported operations, or who warrant redress from any negative effects of such operations, particularly among the poor or marginalized. It should be added that the Bank recognizes itself as a stakeholder with its own objectives, policies and institutional responsibilities.<sup>9</sup>

The World Bank Learning Group on Popular Participation has also endeavoured to specify and operationalize participation. It includes in its conceptual discussion, a classification of *instruments* of participation. These refer to institutional devices which organize and promote the sustainability of popular participation such as local-level development workers, NGOs (local, intermediary, apex organizations), local government units, central government agencies and private sector mechanisms.<sup>10</sup>

The World Bank maintains that its Articles of Agreement prohibits its intervention in political affairs, and given its focus on economic development, its interest in participation is primarily as a *means* to improve the results of its investments. In contrast, several bilateral agencies (e.g. CIDA, GTZ, ODA, Sida, USAID) refer to participation as both an *end* and a *means*. Such a perspective views participation as an explicit aspect of, or inextricably linked to, objectives such as democratization, equality, human rights and sustainable development, and as an essential element of good governance. In this context, participation as means (fulfillment of project objectives) and as an end in itself (development of a sense of ownership, of authority and control by stakeholders) are of equal weight. Some of these agencies currently are also in the process of refining "participation" in methodological or procedural terms as a step towards providing instruments conducive to mainstreaming participation in agency planning.

The OECD/DAC definition of participatory development and popular participation in the document from 1993 **DAC Orientations on Participatory Development and Good Governance** (OECD/GD 1993) approximates the World Bank definition cited above. Participatory development is defined as a process by which people take an active and influential hand in shaping decisions that affect their lives. In a recent (August 1994) document compiled by the OECD Development Centre that reports the major results of a comprehensive research project "Promoting Participatory Development through Local Institutions", the elements of partnership, dialogue and negotiation are emphasized. 'Participatory development stands for a *partnership* which is built upon the basis of a *dialogue* among the various actors (stakeholders), during which the "agenda" is set jointly, and local views and indigenous knowledge are deliberately sought and respected. This implies *negotiation* rather than the dominance of an externally set project agenda. Thus people become actors instead of being simply beneficiaries'.<sup>11</sup> This definition also implies as a main objective the *empowerment of the local actors* (as individuals or groups and institutions) to make participation sustainable. Entry points for the process should be sought both from below (NGOs, local organizations) and from the top (in policy dialogue).

In this connection, we note the important observation by the 21-22 February 1994 DAC/OECD Development Centre Seminar on Participatory Development, that notions of "targeting" beneficiaries currently so central to poverty alleviation discourses are in many ways contrary to the essence of participatory development. This is because participatory development emerges and should be promoted from below and from within. Targeting is not only a military term, but essentially a development planning mechanism associated with the channelling of top-down, externally supplied inputs. It involves beneficiary designation in terms of social or political characteristics defined largely from the development agenda and analytical perspectives of donors.

We might add that moving from understandings of participation implied in more passive designations such as 'beneficiaries' or even 'users' to those implied in more active ones such as 'stakeholders' or 'partners' concerns more than a change in terminology. What is required ultimately is a willingness and ability to find ways of sharing management initiative, responsibility, and authority in programmes and projects. It is also necessary to possess an awareness of some of the false (implicit) assumptions agencies often have about how local 'participant' populations and organizations work, and a willingness to challenge these. Participation requires learning about communities and about people's knowledge, skills, needs and interests.

It is possible to distinguish analytically several different *dimensions* and different *levels*, *degrees* or *kinds* of participation involved in a particular development programme or activity.<sup>12</sup> These terms (i.e., dimensions, levels degrees, kinds) are used slightly differently by different authors and organizations. They refer basically to *where* in the project or support cycle participation occurs (planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation, take-over), to the *quality*, *intensity* or *extent* of participation (as passive beneficiaries, as informants, cost-sharers, consultees, or as colleagues or counterparts with a voice in management, decision-making and control), and to societal levels (local/grassroots, regional/provincial, national).

An operational dimension of participation concerns specific project *functions* or *tasks* such as construction, operation, maintenance, management and distribution of benefits.<sup>13</sup> In many projects, participation does take place with regard to tasks such as construction work, operation and maintenance (contributions in the form of money, labour or material), but more seldom in project formulation, management, control over resources and distribution of benefits. If resources are contributed by the 'intended beneficiaries' or 'primary stakeholders', these should obviously also have a say in the management and distribution of project resources and benefits. Participation in these respects must be introduced and prepared already from the beginning. As a project or development activity reaches a certain level of maturity, the beneficiaries or their organizations should gradually take over responsibility for management and other key project functions because this is a fundamental prerequisite for final take-over and project sustainability in the long run.

Links between funding agencies' attention to and experiences with participation on the one hand, and on the other hand attention to and experiences with gender have been noted by some development administrators and researchers. To a certain extent, attention to the one often encourages attention to the other. However, these links have as yet seldom been systematically explored. The DAC review of women-in-development (WID) as a cross-cutting issue in evaluations concludes that project objectives formulated in such a way as to emphasize human dimensions is a significant factor for the incorporation of WID issues.<sup>14</sup> However, WID/gender and participation do not exist in a dynamic, mutually reinforcing relationship with one another, since much evidence shows that a focus on participation does not automatically ensure or result in attention to gender.<sup>15</sup> The World Bank group, OECD Development Centre and others, discuss as a particular focus, gender aspects and the active participation of women at various phases of programmes. Gezelius and Millwood (1988) suggest that representation and participation in terms of gender could be used in evaluations as a feasible indicator of the nature and overall degree of participation in projects.<sup>16</sup>

What appears to be more to the point about connections between gender and participation in the context of evaluations is that there are striking parallels both in planning and the work demanded (e.g. policy commitment, sensitisation, developing analytical frameworks, plans of action, operational guidelines, provision of staff training, etc.) as well as in the challenges that each of these sets of issues poses for evaluation. Weekes-Vagliani (1994) notes that much the same factors that prevent projects from being or becoming participatory generally, are those which also contribute to the exclusion of women.<sup>17</sup>

With regard to evaluations, since these provide opportunities for testing the translation of development policy into implementation, both gender and participation require rethinking of assessment methods. Particularly with respect to e.g. realizing a focus on equality and empowerment aspects, solving problems of establishing institutional and local partnerships or at the very least suitable forms for consultation, promoting recognition and analysis of the roles, responsibilities, resources and interests of female and male stakeholders, participation and WID/GAD have much in common. And since both monitoring and evaluation tend more readily to assess inputs or physical outputs, the need for innovative approaches and better indicators for assessing impact and effects is also something that evaluation of gender and evaluation of participation share.

## 2.2 Participation and Different Categories of Development Organisations

It appears that the small-scale, local community-specific projects aiming at social or service objectives, and frequently operated by NGOs, comprise a common form of donor assistance to the promotion of participation. NGOs are seen by donors (and by themselves) as working primarily with well-defined, grassroots-level, beneficiary groups or categories. Since NGOs do not work within governmental structures, and seldom rely directly on governmental channels or other resources, they are less restrained by bureaucratic obstacles and political resistance than bilateral and multilateral agencies. Advocates of support to participation through

NGOs often maintain that such support contributes to more effective achievement of project objectives because of NGO ability to reach people at local community levels.

However, the NGO category of organisation contains widely differing kinds of organisations, some of which are working in a participatory manner, while others do not. Some of the main limitations of NGOs with respect to participatory development strategies concern the tenuousness of their ability to make a difference in terms of decision-making and social and political influence in a wider sense. While smallness of scale has been considered amenable to contact with primary beneficiaries or stakeholders, even cumulative effects on policy formulation or widespread civic institution building, efforts to scale-up successful local NGO projects and activities are few and have often proved problematic.

It should also be noted that some problems related to induced development projects or programmes, cannot be resolved exclusively at the local level. Such programmes must often make decisions and consider trade-offs regarding e.g. allocation of limited resources and sequencing of activities, that affect various local communities. While inputs into the planning and operational processes of such undertakings can be provided through consultations at the local level, some strategic, overall decisions must be taken at national, regional or programme level.

The definitions and approaches to participation adopted by multilateral organizations, bilateral agencies and NGOs differ due to their different politico-organizational mandates and the contexts or settings in which they are embedded and operate. Promoting participation is a complex task that must be dealt with at both local, intermediate and national levels.

A key role for multilateral and bilateral agencies is to encourage governments, through policy dialogue, to become more open and encouraging to participatory approaches. Governments are, for example, the most direct and influential actors for encouraging a favourable environment for participation among the intermediary public sector organisations which operate - frequently in cooperation with NGOs and grassroots' organisations - at regional and local levels. Although the fact that both public sector organisations and NGOs including various types of grassroots' organisations, clearly exist in a variety of manifestations is obviously significant for participation, it is beyond the scope of this paper to fully explore these various forms.<sup>18</sup>

With regard to agency field presence, deemed important for support to participatory projects, bilateral agencies tend to have more extensive and continuous field presence than most multilateral agencies. NGOs in turn normally have more presence in the field and at the local level, than bilateral agencies. The different preconditions and characteristics, and the complementarity in several respects, of these organisations mean that there is considerable space and need for collaboration between them in order to fully exploit their respective comparative advantages.

### 2.3. Costs and Benefits of Participation

A main finding of the World Bank Learning Group on Participatory Development is that "there is significant evidence that participation can, in many circumstances, improve the quality, effectiveness and sustainability of projects, and strengthen ownership and commitment of government and stakeholders. Community participation strategies are found to be particularly important in reaching the poor".<sup>19</sup> Systematic evaluations or "measurements" of the costs and benefits of participation are scarce, but generally indicate that the costs, in terms of time and money spent, tend to be relatively higher for participatory projects in the course of their early phases. However, the initial investments in participation tend to pay off in terms of increased efficiency and sustainability and in saving time, in subsequent phases.

Recently, the World Bank undertook a survey of participation-related costs in 42 participatory projects, which revealed that the most costly element of participatory preparation was the salary cost of professionals skilled in participation (10-15 percent more time spent than in non-participatory projects). It was also found that participatory projects required more supervision during early implementation, to strengthen or create local organizational structures and collaborative mechanisms (1/3 more time spent than in non-participatory projects). A number of Bank task managers believed, however, that the extra efforts spent in early phases will be offset by significantly less supervision in later years.<sup>20</sup>

Delays in disbursement during early phases may occur in projects where communities are given the responsibility to select, design and implement project activities because of the time required to build up sufficient community awareness and capacity. Rapid increases in the subsequent numbers of communities involved and in their capacity to manage the activities, as well as better prospects for long-term success, generally compensate for the time spent on initial preparation. For poor people, the costs of participation are generally measured in terms of added time spent on organizational matters (attending meetings, discussing priorities, resolving conflicts, etc.) as well as in terms of any cost-sharing contribution they may make, and such costs may be considered by them as high.

A statistical analysis of 121 rural water supply projects in Asia, Africa and Latin America supported by 18 international agencies found that "beneficiary participation" was the single most important factor in determining overall quality of implementation. It was also considered to be a significant contributing factor to project effectiveness, as well as to the proportion of the water systems in good condition, overall economic benefits, percent of the target population reached, and environmental benefits. Beneficiary participation also resulted in community members acquiring new water-related and organisational skills, and strengthened community organizations which went on to undertake other development activities.<sup>21</sup> Other benefits of participation observed in case studies of World Bank-financed projects include: an increased uptake of project services, decreased operational costs, an increased rate of return, and increased incomes of primary producers.<sup>22</sup> It has also been pointed out that in conventional (quantitative)

evaluations of participation the costs of participation are generally weighed only against estimated benefits and not against the costs of *not* encouraging and assisting participation.<sup>23</sup> Several of the benefits of participation presented above would thus constitute costs associated with non-participatory approaches (lack of use and misuse of facilities, poor maintenance, deterioration of infrastructure, low rate of sustainability, etc).

### 3. Evaluating Participation Requires Methodological Adjustments

In discussing evaluation and participation, it is essential to distinguish among different types of projects and sectors, as well as different types of evaluation. There is also the important distinction to be made between evaluation *of* participation and participation *in* evaluation. The evaluation of participation in development projects refers to the assessment of a specific objective or outcome of an activity, whereas participation in evaluation refers to the degrees of involvement of different categories of social actors (e.g. agencies, project staff, grassroots groups) in the evaluation process. Evaluation *of* participation could, of course, take place in any type of development project to determine, for example, its extent and outcome, or its implications with respect to conventional evaluation criteria such as relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, replicability and sustainability of project activities.

Evaluating development process and outcome in terms of participation involves a consideration of the concepts, definitions, dimensions, and levels of, as well as forms for participation as discussed above, with respect to specific projects or programmes. As indicated above (2.1.) beneficiary participation *in* evaluation, or participatory evaluation, require attention and preparation already at the very beginning of the project cycle.

Data collection methods for the evaluation of participation may include traditional quantitative methods, such as those spelled out in most donor evaluation manuals (the use of e.g. sample surveys, questionnaires) to 'measure' the quantifiable aspects of participation. Conventional procedures involve some basic criteria of participation. On the basis of these criteria, a set of appropriate indicators (and interview questions) may be selected, which can be assumed to reflect extent, intensity and changes in participation during the life cycle, or at determined stages, of a programme or activity.

Examples of such quantitative indicators are, for example, number of project beneficiaries as a proportion of total population, frequency of project meetings, proportions and total numbers of beneficiaries attending such meetings (or taking part in different project components or activities), recruitment of leadership as a function of social position or stratification pattern, rotation of leadership over time, distribution and circulation of key functions or tasks within the project or beneficiary organization, beneficiary contributions in the form of labour, money or material, distribution of material benefits resulting from the project or activity.

However, since participation is itself a process of complex social change, quantitative indicators provide us with only a very incomplete understanding or picture of participation. When the objective is to determine the *quality* or *character* of participation and *how* it takes place, identification of *qualitative* indicators is necessary. Such indicators may be used to describe or characterize the relations between leaders and general members of an organization (e.g. authoritarian, democratic), forms of organization (e.g. hierarchical, communitarian, formal, informal), forms and dynamics of decision-making (e.g.

through majority vote or consensus), group solidarity, community spirit, conflict and problem-solving capacity, etc. Such properties, qualities, attitudes, relationships or behaviour, are very difficult if not impossible to measure in quantitative terms. They must rather be perceived, described and analyzed through qualitative interviews and direct observation by the evaluators. In order to deal properly with those aspects, evaluation of participation will always require some combination of quantitative and qualitative approaches to data collection, analysis and interpretation.

As is pointed out in a recent ILO volume, 'Participation as a process unfolds throughout the life of a project, and, it is hoped, continues when the project formally ceases, and it has a range of characteristics and properties. The evaluation of participation, therefore, will involve a number of quantifiable aspects; it will also involve a less predictable number of qualitative aspects'.<sup>24</sup>

Quantitative aspects can be dealt with by *measurement* that leads, through application of quantitative methods of data collection and analysis, to *judgement*. Qualitative aspects require *descriptions* (of properties or processes) leading, through *interpretation*, to statements about their nature or consequences. Evaluation of qualitative aspects therefore requires different indicators and methods of data collection and analysis. Oakley (1991:243-245) suggests, *inter alia*, the following key principles or characteristics of qualitative evaluation:

It is *heuristic* in that the evaluation approach is subject to continuous redefinition as knowledge of the process and its outcome increases.

It is *holistic* and sees the programme as a working whole which needs to be understood and analyzed from many different perspectives (context, participants, inter-relationships with other projects, etc.).

It is *inductive* in the sense that the evaluator seeks to understand the outcome of a development project without imposing predetermined expectations. It is also essentially *interpretive*, built up through description of the significant facts, figures, and characteristic of the project which are an accurate reflection of its overall complexity.

It implies, by its very nature, a close contact with the participants of a programme in their own environment to understand their realities and details of their everyday life.

It is recognized by most practitioners that the selection and development of qualitative indicators of participation is at an initial stage, and that much work and experimentation remain to be done. Oakley, however, suggests three broad areas of qualitative indicators of participation, directly related to the people involved in the project, and particularly to the changes which occur in the nature, growth and behaviour of the project group as a result of the project activities. These are:

*Organisational growth:* internal structuring of project group, allocation of specific roles to group members, emerging leadership structure, formalisation of group structure;

*Group behaviour:* changing nature of involvement of project group members, emerging sense of collective will and solidarity, involvement in group discussions and decisions, ability to analyze and explain issues and problems;

*Group self-reliance:* increasing ability of project group to propose and to consider courses of action, group members' knowledge and understanding of government policies and programmes, changing relationships of group with project staff/group facilitator, formalisation of independent identity of the group, independent action undertaken by the group.

These indicators, however must also be observed and recorded, and since qualitative indicators mostly are intangible, manifesting themselves over time, they must be related to some observable phenomena or activities and be part of a system of continuous monitoring. 'Monitoring, therefore, has emerged as the key to the evaluation of participation and certainly as the only way to ensure a continual supply of relevant data and information' (Ibid., p. 250). Oakley suggests four categories of concrete phenomena, which, if monitored continually, should provide relevant information and data for both quantitative and qualitative indicators:

*Project or group activities:* economic or other production activities, physical or construction work, collective project group work, project group internal structuring.

*Changes in project group behaviour:* nature of project group meetings, levels of explanation and discussion, people's involvement in project group discussions, incidence of consensus and disagreement, emerging patterns of leadership.

*Group action and articulation:* independent action by project group, levels and nature of contacts with outside officials, levels and nature of contacts with other project groups or organisations.

*Project-group relationship:* nature of initial relationship, building up of the project group, nature and changes in relationship between project and group, project withdrawal.

With respect to these, methods that have been employed (in addition to *questionnaires* in judging certain qualitatively observed phenomena) include *records* and *reports* providing a sort of running account of events as they unfold. FAO's People's Participation Programme, for example, used an individual group record, a 'log-book' in which a continual record of group activities, decisions and membership were kept, as well as diary, which was a continual account of the unfolding of a process of participation<sup>25</sup>; *group discussions*, *key informants*, and

*field workshops*. Through these FAO experiences, it could thus be shown that small-scale farmer organizations or informal groups organized around solving common problems felt by members rather than those identified by outsiders, tended to have higher success rates.<sup>26</sup>

Participant observer evaluation - conducted by a neutral qualified observer to assess or evaluate project processes and effects in local communities - employs various of the qualitative and quantitative information gathering techniques mentioned above. Although the main responsibility for, and direction of, the evaluation process remains with the participant observer it allows for a high degree of influence and participation from different categories of stakeholders.<sup>27</sup>

### 3.1 Participatory Techniques in Evaluation

Parallel to the increasing attention given to popular participation in the course of the 1980's, Rapid Rural Appraisal (RRA) methods evolved from an initial emphasis on rapid and cost-effective data 'extraction' by 'outsiders' towards Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA). PRA reduced the role of the 'outside' researcher or 'expert' to that of 'convenor', 'catalyst', or facilitator' enabling involved groups of people to undertake and share their own investigations and analysis, as well as to plan and take action.<sup>28</sup> The basic 'epistemological' or methodological premises underlying PRA, such as value-pluralism and the rejection of objective 'reality' or 'truth' (there are multiple layers of 'realities' depending on positions in cultural and social settings) and thereby the importance of local knowledge, are also shared by the different versions of 'participatory monitoring' or 'participatory evaluation'.

In participatory evaluation, a variety of beneficiaries and other stakeholders should actively take part in: the determination of evaluation objectives, selection of procedures and data collection methods, analysis and interpretation of data, as well as decisions regarding measures and action based on recommendations produced as a result of the evaluation process.

In practice, however, participation in evaluation is most often limited to the inclusion of a few *techniques* aimed explicitly at project participants or beneficiaries, that are usually taken or adapted from rapid appraisal methodologies, such as group consultations or key informant/resource person interviews. However, these consultations or interviews usually take place within the conventional type of donor evaluation conceived of largely as an end-product or neatly-bounded, one-off type of essentially quantitative exercise. Beneficiaries or stakeholders have thus no participation in the determination of evaluation objectives, modalities, analysis and interpretation of evaluation data, nor has evaluation usually been an aspect of planning and monitoring throughout the project or programme process.

The extremely low incidence of true participatory evaluation reflects partly a lack of ease on the part of donor agencies with the more innovative approaches that such evaluation requires. It also reflects the fact that donors may have little scope

to re-define their own role in evaluation due *inter alia* to demands of accountability and for manifest results from their own governments and/or taxpayer populations. Partly, the little documented experience there indicates that some situations may be less appropriate than others for participatory evaluation, for example in highly technical projects, or when there is such a degree of conflict among different stakeholder groups that collaboration is difficult or impossible, and consensus is unlikely to be reached.<sup>29</sup> In any event, as Marsden, Oakley and Pratt (1994:96) point out, few programmes and projects adopt an authentic participatory approach to evaluation. Largely, this is due to the fact that overall design was not determined by means of a participatory approach, i.e. participation has not taken place throughout the programme or project, thus rendering participatory evaluation artificial or dispensable.

Participatory evaluation as a procedure or technique is applicable in different types of projects and settings. Donor feeling seems to be that participatory evaluation is not intended to entirely replace more conventional evaluation methods. Rather, it should be used as a complement to make such methods more appropriate and effective, and to ensure that the realities and claims of beneficiaries and other stakeholders are taken into account. Our impression is that inclusion of participatory techniques in more or less standard donor evaluations is increasing considerably.

Beneficiary/stakeholder participation in monitoring and evaluation should occur in projects claiming to use a participatory approach. But as indicated above, participatory monitoring and evaluation can be employed also in other types of project. The introduction of participatory techniques in projects that have not followed a participatory approach in planning may have to find ways to deal with certain inherent contradictions and practical difficulties. These would involve, for example, reorientation of conventional time frames, re-scheduling resource allocation and probably new ways of decision-making. Investments of time and resources for participation, however, tend to pay off in the form of firmer beneficiary commitment, more efficient capacity building and ultimately enhanced sustainability.<sup>30</sup>

The increasing interest and work concerning participation in evaluation and evaluation of participation have not been limited to the field of development assistance, but have been influenced and inspired by a broader scientific debate on the theory and practice of evaluation in general.

### 3.2 Participatory Evaluation: An Opportunity for Negotiation?

In a recent comprehensive review of methods and approaches to social evaluation, Marsden, Oakley and Pratt<sup>31</sup> describe the 'traditional type of evaluation' or 'first generation evaluations' as generated by the demands of management from donor perspective, and usually serving the purpose of justifying agency spending. This type of evaluation is conducted by 'external' or 'independent' evaluation experts applying quantitative approaches to data collection ('measurement-oriented') and

relying on a positivist scientific paradigm where the belief in the existence of universal and objective 'truths' constitutes a cornerstone.

A modified version of 'traditional evaluation' is the 'second generation evaluation' characterized by description of patterns of strengths and weaknesses with respect to certain stated objectives, whereas the 'third generation' was characterized by efforts to reach judgements. The evaluator assumed the role of a judge, while retaining the earlier technical and descriptive functions as well. Scope for beneficiary or stakeholder participation in such evaluations has been practically non-existent in 'first generation' evaluations to wider but still narrow in 'second generation' and 'third generation' evaluations. Guba and Lincoln identify the pervasive weaknesses of these three generations of evaluation as: a tendency toward managerialism, failure to accommodate value-pluralism, and overcommitment to the scientific paradigm of inquiry.

As an alternative Guba and Lincoln suggest 'fourth generation evaluation' which is based on two key elements: *responsive focusing* and *constructivist methodology*. Responsive focusing sets the boundaries of the evaluation by the construction and interaction of its stakeholders and the constructivist methodology provides the wider framework in which 'truth' and 'fact' are recognized for their subjectivity. The positivist paradigm and its belief system are rejected.<sup>32</sup> The outcome of this process is not conclusions or recommendations based on 'objective' value judgements, but an agenda for *negotiation* based on the claims, concerns and issues that were not resolved in the evaluation dialogue. 'Fourth generation evaluation' thus constitutes a forum for debate and a framework for participatory techniques in evaluation, as well as, potentially, for participatory evaluation.

Marsden, Oakley and Pratt consider evaluation to be a learning process involving different sets of understandings which need to be negotiated. Evaluations provide important moments in the lives of all development projects, when opportunities for the 'negotiation of values' might be centrally addressed. Participation by the beneficiaries in such negotiation transforms the evaluation into a process of empowerment that offers opportunities for furthering our understanding of the operationalisation of a participatory agenda. Further, such negotiation comprises building blocks in the development of effective partnerships between what tend to be essentially unequal partners, i.e. donor agencies and recipient institutions and communities.

In that context, an interpretive approach is suggested as a complement to more traditional and technocratic or managerial approaches to evaluation. An interpretive approach can at the same time be constructively critical in its focus, while demonstrating a flexible awareness and achieving a balance between qualitative and quantitative measurements. It questions the legitimacy and authority of orthodox evaluation and opens up spaces for the development of dialogue between formerly unequal 'partners'. Such an approach or process of interpretive evaluation in addition to being critical and flexible, emphasizes *negotiation*, and considers beneficiaries' and other stakeholders' perceptions of the evaluation itself

as part of the evaluation. This process of interpretative evaluation consists of the following steps:

1. Identify the full range of interested parties
2. Find out how the evaluation is perceived - stakeholder claims and concerns
3. Provide context and a methodology through which these can be understood, taken into account and constructively criticised
4. Generate as much consensus about different interpretations as possible
5. Prepare an agenda for negotiation
6. Collect and provide the information requested in the agenda
7. Establish and mediate a forum of stakeholders in which negotiation can take place
8. Develop a text available to all
9. Recycle evaluation to take up unresolved issues.

## 4. Review of Documents: Synthesizing Lessons Learned

### 4.1 Documents Reviewed

We have noted that evaluations focused specifically on participation *per se* are few. This is due in part to the fact that the process of translating participation policy, rhetoric, analytical definitions and conceptual ideas about participation into operational concepts and practical procedures in evaluations has only just begun. Moreover, since participation ideally involves a coherent planning framework in which the maximum active involvement of beneficiary and other stakeholder groups occurs throughout the planning-implementation-monitoring-evaluation process, tacking 'participation' onto evaluations of ongoing, conventionally conceived projects and programmes may seem inadequate.

Documents received from eight donors (DANIDA, DGIS, FINNIDA, GTZ, NORAD, ODA, Sida and USAID) were reviewed qualitatively, basically in terms of how participation was defined and discussed in the documents, with a view to getting an overview of the general situation. Where possible, the Terms of Reference for the evaluations or for the papers based on special studies were also reviewed. All documents but one were produced during the 1990s. The agencies are also unevenly represented. This is due of course to the numbers of documents received for review, but also to the nature of the documents. In those cases where donors put a number of documents at our disposal, selection was based on the topic and type of document, as well as on its subject matter and how relevant we judged it to be to both policy and operational dimensions of participation. In a few cases, the total number of documents received was reviewed.

The materials reviewed include evaluations and project documents, as well as some policy papers, analytical reports and procedural manuals. A few of the documents are presented here in some detail. This is because they treat a complex of problematics concerning participation, project planning processes and specific institutional and economic settings that is particularly relevant to the participation and other PD and GG themes.

| <u>Agency/Inst.</u> | <u>Type of Document</u> | <u>Title or Topic</u>                                       | <u>Year</u> |
|---------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------|-------------|
| DANIDA              | evaluation              | Forestation in Sudan                                        | 1993        |
| DANIDA              | evaluation              | Training/Community Planning, Bolivia, Sri Lanka, Zambia     | 1993        |
| DANIDA              | policy                  | Institutional Development in Africa, Asia and Latin America | 1993        |

|                   |                              |                                                                 |      |
|-------------------|------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------|------|
| DANIDA            | sector evaluation            | Support to Agriculture in Asia and Africa                       | 1994 |
| DGIS              | general policy               | Dutch assistance                                                | 1991 |
| ISS/CEBEMO (DGIS) | evaluation/impact study      | NGDO support CPT Norte II, Brazil                               | 1991 |
| DGIS/CEBEMO       | evaluation                   | non-formal education in India                                   | 1993 |
| DGIS              | general policy               | Dutch assistance                                                | 1993 |
| DGIS/NOVIB        | case study evaluation        | Big NGDOs in Latin America                                      | 1993 |
| FINNIDA           | project document             | Integrated Community Development, Nicaragua                     | 1993 |
| FINNIDA           | project document             | Forestry, Zanzibar                                              | 1993 |
| FINNIDA           | project technical papers (4) | Forestry and Participation, Zanzibar                            | 1993 |
| FINNIDA           | workshop report              | PRA in Rural Integrated Project Support, Tanzania               | 1993 |
| FINNIDA           | programme evaluation         | NGO Support Programme, cases Ethiopia, Nepal, Nicaragua, Uganda | 1994 |
| FINNIDA           | programme document           | Livelihood and Food Security, Zambia                            | 1994 |
| FINNIDA           | project documents            | Rural Integrated Project Support, Tanzania                      | 1994 |

|         |                                      |                                                                  |      |
|---------|--------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------|------|
| FINNIDA | village studies                      | Microenterprises, Tanzania                                       | 1994 |
| GTZ     | procedural document                  | Project planning manual                                          | 1991 |
| NORAD   | evaluations analysis                 | Socio-cultural issues in Aid                                     | 1987 |
| NORAD   | evaluation                           | IRDP, Sri Lanka                                                  | 1992 |
| NORAD   | Review and assessment of experiences | IRDPs and District development, Tanzania                         | 1995 |
| ODA     | technical note                       | stakeholder participation                                        | 1995 |
| ODA     | guidance and procedural note         | stakeholder analysis                                             | 1995 |
| ODA     | guidance and procedural note         | assessment of stakeholder participation                          | 1995 |
| SIDA    | evaluation                           | Integrated Rural Development, Guinea-Bissau                      | 1993 |
| SIDA    | evaluation                           | NGO sector support, case studies Bolivia, India, Kenya, Zimbabwe | 1994 |
| SIDA    | policy/procedural document           | Evaluation Manual                                                | 1994 |
| SIDA    | evaluation                           | NGO support, Bangladesh                                          | 1994 |
| SIDA    | procedural manual                    | LFA Guidelines                                                   | 1995 |
| USAID   | evaluation                           | Education for participation in Latin America                     | 1989 |

|       |                                              |                                                                 |      |
|-------|----------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------|------|
| USAID | conceptual paper<br>and guidelines           | Community<br>participation<br>in Water Supply<br>and Sanitation | 1991 |
| USAID | evaluation                                   | Participation<br>in Development<br>Fund Programmes,<br>Africa   | 1992 |
| USAID | policy                                       | Participatory<br>Development                                    | 1993 |
| USAID | issue paper/policy                           | "Best Practices"<br>for participation,<br>Africa                | 1994 |
| USAID | literature review                            | Participation<br>in Economic<br>Policy Reform,<br>Africa        | 1994 |
| USAID | topic paper                                  | Community-based<br>Participation                                | 1994 |
| USAID | topic paper                                  | Participation<br>and Gender                                     | 1994 |
| USAID | evaluation                                   | Civil Society<br>Programmes                                     | 1995 |
| USAID | procedural note<br>and resource<br>materials | Participatory<br>Evaluation                                     | 1995 |

#### 4.2 Donor Agencies' Evidence and other Experiences with Participation

The evaluations do not have a standardized format, a fact which posed somewhat of a challenge in trying to assess consistency of attention to participation in particular documents, as well as in comparisons between documents. In this connection, we also note that the evaluations - and their Terms of Reference - also vary considerably as to what aspects or combination of aspects are selected for coverage or are emphasized relative to one another. The fact that some aspects are given more weight than others is due partly perhaps to the nature and focus of the programme or project, and partly to priorities in donor overall and sector policy objectives at a particular time, or the nature of the cooperation agreement with a particular country.

Evaluation reports were reviewed for participation content in terms of three main concerns. One was in terms of a participation orientation or sensitivity overall, for example as reflected in general discussions in the introductory and main descriptive sections of the reports. The second included whether and how participation was actually reflected in the evaluation criteria selected to represent output or impact. The third was participation content as reflected in evaluation procedures and methodology.

In addition to conventional donor evaluation criteria as designated in the DAC/EGE Framework paper for Evaluation of Programmes promoting Participatory Development and Good Governance (relevance, cost-effectiveness, impact, efficiency/cost-benefit relation, sustainability and/or replicability), where possible the documents were reviewed also in terms of other criteria. These criteria were formulated against the background of the conceptual and analytical issues identified and discussed in Section 2, and include such definitions, factors and indicators of participation as:

- delineation of target, beneficiary or stakeholder groups, how they are described, and definitions and/or analyses of their roles and responsibilities in different phases of the project or programme;
- presence of institutional instruments of participation;
- description and analysis of local organisational structures; evidence of institutional development (not only achievement of immediate project goals);
- evidence of *partnership* and dialogue throughout the project or programme cycle, description and analysis of collaborative mechanisms;
- project group behaviour and dynamics (attendance and participation at meetings, discussions, evidence of group solidarity, of group self-reliance, etc);
- relations between project leadership and beneficiaries or stakeholders, and representation of beneficiary/stakeholder points of view;
- gender dimensions, i.e. the involvement of both women and men in the project or programme area;
- mode of support (e.g. core-funded bilateral programme or NGO);
- linkages (e.g. coalitions with other groups, projects or organizations);
- active monitoring in terms of both qualitative and quantitative methods and indicators as part of a conscious *learning process*; and
- negotiation* with respect to attempts at resolution of inequality or conflict, or of unforeseen external political or social events.

Some donors submitted very few or no evaluation reports at all for review, rendering documentation of direct empirical evidence rather patchy. However, these agencies did submit procedural or other guidance materials that we interpret as good indications of experience as well as of where general policy or prescriptive thinking presently is or is heading in the agencies, with regard to participation. Although a few of the topic and analytic papers discussed the collaborative identification and incorporation of indigenous or beneficiaries' and stakeholders' own assessment criteria and processes into project evaluations, the evaluation reports reviewed provided no information on experiences of donor attempts to actually do so.

As might be expected, agency policies and experiences concerning participation do exhibit some differences. However, many points of commonality also can be noted, a main one being that in a general sense, all of the documents clearly show awareness of participation issues, and also acknowledge the importance of participation. The nature and degree of awareness, and the translation of awareness into explicit, systematic attention to participation vary considerably. Another general observation concerns the more pronounced focus on participation in the documents representing interventions in the agricultural and rural or village development sectors, than in those representing other sectors. Although we suspect that this may indeed be the case, no firm conclusions can be drawn since there is a clear predominance of agricultural/rural development/village development reports in the documentation (particularly the evaluations) chosen by the donors for review, just as there is a bias towards interventions in Africa.

Yet a further striking point of commonality is auspicious for our purposes in this approach paper. This concerns overt donor attempts in the 1990s to transcend the confines of top-down development approaches by adopting participatory strategies to an increasing degree. There is a clear trend not only to plan better in a general sense through e g the formulation of structuring planning frameworks and conceptual tools, but also to promote participatory planning, as is evidenced in the procedural manuals and other guidance documents of several agency documents. Moreover, procedural documents produced in the last year or so not only prescribe participatory planning in general sense and tout the advantages of such planning. They also outline steps for doing different operations associated with participatory planning - e g doing stakehold analysis, and discuss constraints and risks as well as benefits.

## **DANIDA**

DANIDA's policy objectives currently emphasize poverty alleviation, gender equality and protection of the environment. Participation is not a policy goal in itself, but the central role of participation is emphasized in institutional development and institutional capacity-building. Institutions are seen as ensuring that target-groups/intended beneficiaries get a stake and role in development project activities during all stages of the planning cycle, and at all of four societal levels: community or village, local government units as direct partners for area

development projects, line ministries where capacity-building is required for the administration of sector programmes, and national levels of policy dialogue and donor coordination. Participation is defined in policy terms as necessary for transparency at all levels and for operationalizing democracy.

A variety of 'institutions' are acknowledged: indigenous groups based on age, gender, ethnicity, religion, or occupation; various service or user groups; economic organizations such as cooperatives and informal credit associations, in addition to NGOs which work directly at community level. The identification of local institutions is recognized to be a central element for participation to be realized (Uphoff 1986)<sup>33</sup>.

### Experiences

Support to participation has been through some forms of sectoral assistance, e g in the agricultural and natural resources sectors, and to community development and training through NGOs.

Evaluations largely followed precepts defined in the agency's evaluation manual, in which impact assessment - in terms of measurements of income and production increases - is emphasized. The absence of sufficient information for an adequate impact assessment, as well as of a learning process to improve assessment overall is noted. It was found that participation and the role of beneficiaries are not systematically described in operational terms, a situation which appears to be part of reporting difficulties generally. Participation varied somewhat in accordance with project or programme design. Generally, however, it was more often than not limited to implementation phases, and did not include decision-making. In some instances, participation was also restricted to certain groups of people (e g male village committee members) as a result of imposed, top-down design.

Issues of viability, sustainability and replicability were raised, but commonly in terms of financial and not social or participatory sustainability or viability. Extension or NGO activities were instrumental in mobilizing or organizing communities, but not in promoting empowerment or true community management.

With regard to support to the agricultural sector, there is some indication that support through cooperatives, to a rural development fund and through some agricultural research institutes has in some instances had greater effect on income and production - although not necessarily for smallholder production - than support through parastatals.

Very little experience of participatory evaluation was evidenced, although the evaluations all employed some participatory assessment techniques (interviews, group discussions).

## DGIS

The Netherlands' development assistance currently emphasizes participation with respect to poverty alleviation, poor people's income-generation, employment and increased entitlement or ownership of the needy, especially the rural poor. An explicit Dutch policy objective is to foster autonomy and increased capacity through target-group participation. Implementation of programmes is through national governments, regional authorities or NGOs with links to neighborhood organizations in urban areas, or village organizations in rural areas.

Participation is seen as a key element in democratization processes, entailing consciousness-raising and increased political participation through e.g. membership in pressure or lobby groups, thereby enhancing the constitution of civil society. Gender aspects and women's productive roles are stated to comprise a special focus.

### Experiences

The Netherlands funds a quite comprehensive Co-financing Support Programme to large Dutch NGOs for the promotion of active participation by groups and individuals in the development of their own communities. Local initiatives, active local involvement and implementation under local management are key factors in the selection of projects. Some programme evaluations on each of the 3 developing continents take place regularly every year.

The evaluations discuss particularly the issue of *scale* of NGOs, and their reputed comparative advantage with respect to possibilities and limitations in promoting poverty alleviation and general development processes, particularly for rural poor people. Also issues such as conflict and confrontation with project beneficiary groups are discussed.

Immediate goal attainment - particularly in projects involving training - was largely successful. However, in terms of participation, some circumstances noted in the evaluations include underrepresentation of most marginal groups, little evidence of grassroots leadership, and project dynamics that revolve around or are dependent upon certain pivotal, particularly motivated individuals. Participation in project management was found commonly to be restrictive and rigid in structure, with little space for beneficiary participation in decision-making. Despite stated policy intentions, it was found that women were not involved in actual project development, indicating a considerable policy rhetoric to practical action gap. Stronger impact was noted in terms of some entitlement gains, e.g. increased access to public services, than in empowerment.

Participatory evaluation in the projects was lacking, due partly to lack of staff analytical capacity, and the underdevelopment of internal project assessment, as well as to top-down management. The evaluations themselves included participatory assessment techniques such as interviews and group consultations.

## FINNIDA

Finland's policy objectives include the strengthening of civil society and support to participatory development. Traditionally, direct support to participation has been largely through Co-financing Framework Agreements of a block-grant type to Finnish NGOs. More recently, FINNIDA has supported the promotion of participatory processes in planning and project formulation within bilateral programmes as well.

### Experiences

A report from an evaluation of FINNIDA's NGO support programme concluded that support to participation through small NGO projects is largely in the social sectors, and aims at improving access to social entitlements such as services and skills. The evaluation report of the NGO support programme to Finnish NGOs discusses the perception within FINNIDA and its NGO Division (and within other donor agencies, particularly in the Nordic countries like Norway and Sweden), that NGO projects reach more beneficiaries faster and better, and are more participatory than projects funded through bilateral assistance. The emphasis in the 1990s on poverty alleviation, gender, democracy, and environmental issues seems to have strengthened these notions. However, results and impact vary greatly, and a number of weaknesses were found in the NGO projects and the Finnish NGO support programme as a whole. Notable among these was dependence in some cases upon the NGOs in such a way that little or no sustainability was achieved.

Better and more active monitoring is required by the organizations themselves, as well as by FINNIDA. Positive features of identity and operation of the NGOs were found to include relative independence and autonomy with respect to governments, but with respect to participation, definitions of beneficiaries and their roles were imprecise, non-operational, and non-promotional of empowerment.

Very few projects seem actually to have been initially planned with beneficiaries, although the report notes that the projects do seem to address needs defined by them. Almost no baseline or feasibility studies had been carried out, nor was monitoring high on project agendas. This in itself limits a clear understanding of participation in the projects. Gender sensitivity was weak, as was project sustainability ex post.

Participatory techniques were employed in the evaluation, which however, otherwise was designed according to conventional evaluation praxis.

The report notes the low level of funding to NGOs compared to other OECD/DAC donor members. It also questions development effects in terms of participation: no funds have gone directly to southern NGOs since 1992, a contradiction of stated policy intentions of supporting the growth and viability of Southern, indigenous NGOs.

Considerable FINNIDA support is currently being put into measures and activities in bilateral programmes which will lay the groundwork for the evaluation of participation issues in future. These comprise the application of planning frameworks and techniques which incorporate participatory methodologies. It is evident in the project documents for such programmes, that a process is occurring that actively takes on the work of moving from top-down, centrally planned, delivery and transfer approaches towards more process-oriented and participatory ones. This is due partly to the desirability of supporting decentralized structures and local government autonomy, but also to the stated conviction that such approaches are a pre-requisite for sustainable development. What is particularly interesting is that the documents report on attempts that are being made to design not only *new* FINNIDA-supported programmes and projects in a participatory manner, but to re-orient and re-design "old" ones.

The development of planning instruments in the direction of LFA (Logical Framework Approach) models has focused attention on clearer target group designations, the formulation of assessment-amenable objectives and outputs, institutional frameworks, as well as the identification of progress indicators. A number of strategies are being tried such as support to pilot projects specifically for the exploration of new methodologies for participation and empowerment, baseline studies and surveys - both in order to begin a process of continual analysis and a basis for reporting, monitoring and evaluation as well as to establish contact and a dialogue for partnership. One characteristic of this kind of planning is an open-endedness whereby it is hoped that flexibility can be infused so that communities together with local authorities can draw up their own development plans, and implement them according to the priorities, needs and decisions in each locality. A general agenda or format, and broad objectives are established at the outset of the programmes, but exact content is determined processually and in accordance with priorities determined through negotiative, participatory planning. In this connection, another characteristic is the recognition of diversity and stratification in beneficiary groups and an attempt to operationalize this recognition by disaggregating beneficiary or client groups or even individuals, and including all of these in planning. Yet another characteristic is the emphasis on methodologies and the use of PRA exercises.

Vehicles for participation include: meetings and group discussions, workshops and seminars initially to determine what measurable targets should be, and as the projects progress, for monitoring purposes and as an instrument for self-management; organisational measures and structures such as municipality development committees (FADES in Nicaragua), and the "teams-within-teams" system in the Luapula Livelihood and Food Security Programme (LLFSP) in northern Zambia, whereby farmer representatives at group, camp, block or sub-district, district and provincial levels take part in continual planning.

Project documents for two of FINNIDAs ongoing programmes in Tanzania - Zanzibar Forestry Development Project (ZFDP), and Rural Integrated Project - Support Programme (RIPS) in southern Tanzania - illustrate responses to what is seen as a changing development context that requires innovative planning

approaches. Earlier phases of these programmes - beginning in 1979 for ZFDP and 1988 in the case of RIPS - were characterized by typical top-down, delivery principles, and pre-determined (from the point of view of local clients) foci. In both of these programmes, lack of involvement of beneficiaries and local institutions was noted in mid-term reviews or impact assessments. FINNIDA supported lengthy planning phases - including studies and training in participatory methodologies, gender sensitivity and PRA exercises - after one or several implementation phases, in order to formulate bottom-up strategies and a framework for shared project responsibility in a communicative, negotiative process of mutual learning. The idea is that local knowledge and perspectives rather than externally defined project content is to be focussed, and there is an emphasis on participation in appraisal, in monitoring as well as in evaluation. Participatory principles are emphasized through project cycles. There are also attempts to consistently incorporate gender perspectives and the needs of the poorest people and young people who lack resources, education and status, in different aspects of the projects including sensitization and training activities.

These programmes currently recognize diversity in the rural populations addressed in an operational manner in that the various beneficiary or client groups are all to be represented on project planning bodies, and involved in other ways, e g through meetings and workshops. The two programmes attempt to link into decentralization processes in Tanzania, in ways intended also to promote the good rapport necessary for mutual reliance and learning between local authorities and local women and men. Extension services are among the most important elements in the participatory planning strategies pursued.

The documents raise issues of cross-fertilization of ideas and resources through collaboration with other bilateral or multilateral agencies, such as FAO and SIDA through the Forest, Trees, and People Programme in the case of ZFDP. In both cases, a number of auxilliary technical or other analytical reports, present discussions of topics of interest to the participatory focus of the projects-in-planning.

The Preparation Assistance Team instrumental in formulating the new-approach RIPS Phase II points out the difficulties of monitoring and assessing processual impact. It also notes the necessity of dealing with what it sees as contradictions between FINNIDA's problem-oriented guidelines for project preparation, and the process approach adopted in the new RIPS.

## GTZ

Attention to planning methodologies has figured strongly in the work of GTZ since the mid-1980s. The procedural paper on methods and instruments for the planning and implementation of projects includes an orientative introduction, and sections comprising definition of concepts and procedural instructions - from the donor agency perspective - for GTZ's variant of LFA-planning (ZOPP), for economic

project assessment, for the formulation of plans of operations, for monitoring and evaluation, and for project progress reporting and reviews.

ZOPP stipulates that all groups involved in a project should take part in the planning through a series of workshops and consultations. However, it does not specify where in the planning process and by whom initiatives for participation are to be taken for e.g. problem, participation, and objectives analyses. The impression is that these for the most part are taken by the donor.

Project planning, information, steering and reporting are conceived in the document as comprising a coherent planning system.

### Experiences

ZOPP is currently being evaluated, and GTZ is in the process of further developing the ZOPP concept with particular attention to its integration into a participatory understanding of GTZ development cooperation management.

## **NORAD**

Central policy principles for Norwegian development cooperation include beneficiary orientation, poverty alleviation and support to women.

### Experiences

In 1987, the Norwegian Ministry of Development Cooperation/NORAD commissioned a desk study on attention to socio-cultural perspectives in Norwegian development assistance. The Terms of Reference included a request for suggestions as to what evaluation of social and cultural aspects - including beneficiary orientation and gender perspectives - should or could entail, based on the findings of the study. As part of the desk study, a review of reports from ten evaluations and three country framework studies was carried out.

The resulting report does not address participation *per se*, but rather situates participation in a context of overall socio-cultural analysis and planning. Information on social and cultural conditions and perspectives was found to be generally lacking, or treated only summarily and unsystematically in the documents. Weaknesses were noted in Terms of Reference with regard to explicit requests for socio-cultural aspects to be reported upon. The evaluations tended to assess technical or administrative aspects, but to neglect assessing impact in terms of consequences for the target group. Beneficiary designations or definitions were found to be poor, and a lack of beneficiary participation in projects was noted. Evaluation criteria with respect to socio-cultural phenomena were also found to be either lacking completely or tenuous. The study also concluded that project objectives often were formulated in very general terms, particularly with respect to socio-cultural issues. In terms of evaluation methodologies, only half of the reports had conducted some form of consultation with beneficiaries. The report states,

among other things, that better criteria should be developed for assessing socio-cultural issues in NORAD evaluations, that these should be standardised and that addressing socio-cultural issues in reports in terms of such criteria should be compulsory.

A prominent form of Norwegian support to participation has been through integrated rural development programmes in which the concept of innovative, process-oriented planning has been linked closely to ideas of participation and empowerment. To a considerable extent, the design of such programmes reflects a desire to address some of the issues noted in the desk study report.

Integrated rural development programmes in Hambantota, Sri Lanka, and in Kigoma and Rukwa regions in western Tanzania are all multi-sectoral programmes that have been characterised by an openness of objectives and a processual or recurrent planning approach for the simultaneous development of institutional capacity and project input. All three of these began in the late 1970s from smaller projects and developed into integrated area development programmes during the 1980s. No pre-determined outputs or overall impact were specified in advance. Exact content was to be formulated gradually, as a result of negotiation between NORAD and the partner ministries, and of experiences generated. Local government institutional frameworks for planning and implementation were defined in each case, and participation was seen as an *organisational* issue, in terms of a decentralized institutional framework within which local level involvement could be inserted. The programmes characteristically have recognized several categories of "participants", including government agencies, political institutions and representatives local level organisations including NGOs, popular organisations sometimes instituted by the government, as well as primary project beneficiaries. Emphasis has been put most strongly on local government agencies in the case of Hambantota, and district councils in the case of Tanzania.

The documents reviewed for these three integrated rural development programmes resulted from extensive processes of evaluation and review involving such elements as specific topic studies, seminars, meetings and interviews in Norway and in the partner countries. The Hambantota evaluation itself was seen as an element in the overall planning process, and the team uses the term *formative* to characterize the nature of the evaluation exercise. The report states that the aim of the evaluation was more to understand the dynamics of the Hambantota programme, than to assess exact impact or degree of success. Rather than aiming at an exacting assessment of quantifiable targets in terms of achievements and failures - something that moreover would have been difficult due to the aforementioned open formulation of objectives - the evaluation attempted to assess the development effects of the recurrent planning approach, the innovative capacity of the programme, replicability and potential sustainability of results.

Since participation was viewed also by the evaluation as an organisational issue, most evaluative attention was focussed on the key institutional partners and their development, rather than on the participation of primary target or beneficiary groups. Beneficiary participation was found to be more effective in village

mobilization projects than in sector-based social infrastructure projects, e g in the areas of education and health. It was found that village leadership tended to dominate 'participation' in needs and problems analyses. Beneficiary participation was most tangible in implementation phases through contributions of labour. In spite of impressive numbers of structures having been accomplished (e g latrines, buildings), the report notes evidence that some of the poorest families were actually exploited through communal works, since this was not remunerated and instead drained away time that could have been spent on wage labour. Beneficiary participation in monitoring and evaluation likewise was found to be weak.

The report admits weak direct participation by beneficiary and target groups in the evaluation itself, with strong participation by representatives for different parts of the Sri Lankan institutional framework instead.

The IRDPs in western Tanzania exhibit similar experiences. These two programmes are discussed extensively in a report from a study of NORAD and other donor experiences of rural development in Tanzania. The report notes that emphasis, particularly in later phases of the two programmes, has been on strengthening public sector institutions, rendering participation thus an issue involving district councils and the administration of district funds for community development and for self-help projects at village level. Beneficiary participation is neglected, in that village participation or mobilization appears to be only marginal and tends to involve village leadership categories. There is little evidence of the participation of specially designated categories of beneficiaries and target groups, such as women and the poorest citizens of both sexes. The reviewers point out what they see as a clear contradiction between strengthening local government administration and planning on the one hand, and promoting community or beneficiary participation on the other hand.

The report notes weak programme documentation and the absence of systematic reporting. Subsequently, assessment of impact is difficult after the relatively short implementation periods thus far. However, the authors do report that results seem to be weak in terms of increased welfare and a stronger rural economy, as well as in terms of increased institutional capacity.

Tanzanian participation in the review itself was primarily confined to contributions by a Tanzanian consultant who compiled part of the bibliography of relevant literature and documents. No beneficiary participation or consultation seems to have taken place.

For all three of these IRDPs, concern was expressed in the reports about weaknesses in the planning system. While there is some evidence of an increased innovative planning capacity, and of the use of consultative, participatory methods (e g courses, workshops, group discussion meetings) in planning in the partner institutional structures, there is concern that the openness of objectives encourages attention to the short-term, with implications for potential sustainability. A conclusion is that the IRDP objectives were *too* broad and open-ended to provide adequate operational or methodological direction. Proposals in the reports include

formulation of a sharper focus for the programme through more precise development objectives and a smaller number of sub-programmes.

## ODA

Stakeholder participation and planning is currently part of ODA's efforts to minimize top-down planning and encourage what is termed two-way or responsive planning modes.

ODA's Social Development Department has recently produced a set of three documents representing the state-of-the-art in ODA efforts to develop good working definitions and appropriate tools and methods for enhancing stakeholder participation. The first of these is a Technical Note based on agency consultations concerning experiences with participation, and briefly synthesizes existing ODA best practice with regard to participatory approaches. The remaining two documents are guidance notes on stakeholder analysis and assessing stakeholder participation respectively. All three documents are concise and accessibly compiled with succinct discussions of key issues, including partnership and the role of the donor agency in participatory approaches. They are also outfitted with checklists and examples to help planners think through stakeholder participation in a stepwise manner, and to aid them in presenting stakeholder analyses and participation monitoring in selected ODA project documents.

The Technical Note provides definitions and conceptual tools, as well as descriptions of specific practice and methods in different kinds of assistance activities and at different stages of ODA project cycle planning and management. Methods and tools for participation analysis involve refining the 'stakeholder' concept. Beneficiary and stakeholder groups are differentiated according to e g interests, expectations and relations to other groups, so that the various dimensions of participation in a specific intervention can be rendered visible, as well as the assumptions and risks involved. It is emphasized that in the interest of sustainability, decision-making by all interested parties at all stages of the project cycle is to be striven for. A stakeholder analysis is conducted to determine who should participate, i e key primary and secondary stakeholders.

The documents describe a basic methodology for doing stakeholder analysis, and indicate that a staff training programme is underway in ODA. Stakeholder analysis combines institutional appraisal and social analysis, and contributes to project design through process approaches and LFA frameworks. With regard to measuring and assessing primary stakeholder participation, qualitative, quantitative and time dimensions of participation indicators are discussed. Quantitative indicators include relative numbers of participating groups disaggregated according to sex, class or rank. Qualitative participation indicators include evidence of negotiated or consensual decision-making, evidence of reduced reliance on project providers or staff, emergence of leadership and the effective allocation of roles and functions among group members, development of an ability to self-monitor activities and progress, and evidence of conflict management and resolution.

## Sida

The primary policy objective for Swedish development cooperation is to improve the living standard of the poorest women and men in the developing countries it assists. Currently, the policy objectives for programme support emphasize poverty reduction, gender perspectives and protection of the environment, in addition to promotion of resource growth, social and economic equality and democratic development.

Participation in itself is not formulated as a goal, and Sida presently has no specific or separate policy for either NGO support or for participatory development. Rather, participation is considered an integral element in processes for achieving the main policy objectives. An example is the current work by internal task forces concerning poverty reduction and democratisation as prioritized issues in Swedish development cooperation. The Poverty Task Force adheres to a definition of participation as: a process whereby people - especially poor women and men - can influence political life, policy formulation, determine development directions and choice of development investments and interventions which affect them.

In terms of LFA planning methodology, Sida has chosen to emphasize a *result-oriented* programme and project management strategy (cf. emphasis on objectives-oriented management in ZOPP of the GTZ, or the problem-oriented approach of FINNIDA). This management model is intended to focus planning attention on objectives, planned outputs and continual monitoring. The Guidelines document defines results as 'the actual outputs *and* effects of a project' (our italics). Participatory principles and techniques are stated as being important in a procedural sense, particularly in problem determination, participation analysis and objectives analysis which are recommended to take the form of an open and participatory consultation. However, it is unclear how participation as partnership and mutual responsibility for a given project is to be realized as a consistent element throughout planning and implementation. Indicators are required to be quantifiably measurable and quite exacting, which may mitigate against an adequate rendering of processual successes in terms of the project matrix.

### Experiences

Swedish support to participation has been through sectoral funding e.g. to the agricultural and rural development sectors, funding to NGOs, and direct funding to thematic areas such as human rights, democratization and gender whereby national and local-level advocacy and other organizations have received support.

NGOs are seen as important for the realization of participation goals due to their outreach potential to underprivileged groups. They serve also to increase public awareness of development trends. Swedish support to NGOs is channelled in 2 main ways, although specific countries or sectors may evidence other forms. These are (1) direct funding through Swedish embassies or development cooperation

offices in the countries; and (2) indirect funding through Swedish NGOs. Sida has direct block-grant agreements with a few larger NGOs in Sweden.

The evaluation reports discuss relevance and impact of support in terms of whether project inputs are the correct ones to solve identified problems. The process of problem identification itself and participation in that context is discussed in the evaluation of a rural development programme in terms of extension structures and contact with village associations.

The NGO evaluations discuss perspectives of the different actors, ways in which the NGOs concerned attempt to address donor expectations and deal with new targeting and participation agendas. These include networking to broaden the base for organized NGO interests, and to facilitate dialogue with governments and with Sida. Issues of ownership and institutional development are also treated as indicators of impact and, indirectly, of NGO ability to promote participation.

NGO outreach to the poor was found to vary greatly. Moreover, findings also indicate that NGOs rarely themselves undertake sufficient analysis that could substantiate or refute claims of outreach. It was noted, for example that rural differentiation is seldom analyzed and thus may not be thoroughly understood in specific instances. Two major conclusions reached are that: (1) the overwhelming majority of NGO projects and programmes have achieved or are clearly in the process of achieving the stated and immediate objectives for which Sida's NGO Department provided funds; and (2) success at achieving immediate project objectives provided little guidance to the overall *development impact* of the projects, when viewed more broadly with respect to relevance or sustainability of the immediate impact. Very little still is known about how people's lives have been touched or changed.

Sustainability was weak, except where NGO work could be linked in some way into government or other wider organizations. Results with respect to participation was most easily apparent in terms of gender, to the extent that an increase in the involvement of women appeared to have taken place. However, in general participation terms, it was found that clients seldom were involved in decision-making. Rather, it seemed that the commitment, energies and decisions of a few key founder NGO members propelled the projects.

With regard to operational definitions relating to the assessment of participation, the NGO sector evaluation reports provide important discussions of methodology and evaluation procedure. These concern the selection of appropriate assessment criteria such as *effectiveness* and *impact*, and also the desirability of developing suitable assessment criteria or indicators specifically for comparison with respect to the relative development impact of NGO programmes and projects. In this connection, the reports discuss *contextuality*, i.e. situating NGO efforts in the specific country and political contexts in which they operate. Impact assessment focused consciously on a wide range of issues and indicators, among them gender, environmental awareness sustainability, and institutional or other more wide-range

development impact beyond immediate project sites and the attainment of immediate project objectives.

Evaluation methodology included participatory techniques for the direct involvement of beneficiaries in the evaluation. These techniques were conceived mainly to secure reliable information concerning beneficiary roles, perspectives and behaviour with respect to specific project interventions, and were not part of a participatory process of project ownership and decision-making. In the main, evaluation modalities followed conventional donor evaluation culture.

## USAID

USAID has identified participatory development as a central policy objective. In a policy paper on participatory development, it is clearly stated that the task of USAID support is to promote opportunities for local involvement in all aspects of interventions including planning. The participation focus has Congressional legislative backing and is also prominent and confirmed in *internal* consciousness-raising and work within the agency, as well as in programmes and projects. Perhaps due to the strong participation discourse within the agency, innovative efforts such as a timely literature review of participation in economic policy reform, are evinced.

Support to participation has been largely through NGOs, and through special Fund support, such as the USAID Development Fund for Africa (DFA).

### Experiences

Analytical papers and source documents which present experiences from the DFA relating case studies of different approaches to consultation and local involvement, to a greater extent than the evaluation reports provide a picture of USAID experiences with and current work on participation. The source documents discuss various aspects of operational participation in development activities, both in project and non-project forms of assistance.

The source documents and evaluation reports indicate that whatever the degree or extent of attainment of objectives, largely it still continues to be the case that local participation in project or programme strategy formulation, design and development *after* key decisions about the interventions have already been made.

Documents reviewed include a report from an evaluation of the Programme of Education for Participation (PEP) in Costa Rica, Guatemala and Honduras. It assesses programme efficiency in terms of outcomes as measured against objectives of enabling individuals through civic education focussed on 'citizenship skills' to collectively improve their life circumstances, by i a using democratic processes effectively to make claims on public resources and services, and becoming involved in local and national politics. This report raises key issues such as the role of 'professionalism', quantification measures or degree of goal

attainment, and NGO project effectiveness. The opinion of the evaluator is that after only 3 years of operation, the PEP had attained remarkable results, by accomplishing its major objectives in all three countries. The report particularly notes the high qualifications, visions and commitment of the professionals implementing the programme, and clearly considers this a major factor in its success.

The PEP report assesses objectives achievement in terms of numbers of people reached by different forms of civic education, numbers of representatives from grassroots-level groups who have received leadership and organizations training, etc. It also notes the individual gains made by many women, who are said to have won a more positive image of themselves with respect to being equal participants in community change processes. However, the report contains little discussion of evaluation methodology. No mention is made of conflict or of negotiation mechanisms, nor of the participation of beneficiaries in actual project formulation. The impression is of a strong, professional leadership proceeding according to top-down agendas.

The DFA source documents discuss participation and provide ideas for operationalization through the incorporation of local-level perspectives of poor rural and urban women and men in Sub-Saharan Africa *during the planning process* for project and programme assistance. They also note the considerable variability of degree and type of local participation found in DFA projects. An important observation was also that demands of donor coordination can jeopardize implementation of donor mandates for participation and consultation of poor people in programme design. Engendering participation is time-consuming and labour-intensive, but the DFA reports note that the experiences documented comprise evidence that there are many innovative and successful strategies in operation for putting USAID participatory principles into practice.

Another point made is the fact that choice of sector alone does not automatically target poor women and men, or insure participation of the poor even when poor women and men are overwhelmingly in the majority of a given population, e.g. large parts of the informal sector. Yet another is that participation by ultimate beneficiaries is *not* the same as participation of organized NGOs who are said to represent the beneficiaries.

Two of the documents reviewed discuss community or community-based participation and have been prepared by consulting institutions to USAID. One of these is a paper which discusses the participation paradigm shift in development thought and practice. In the period 1970s and early 1980s, participation was advocated, but its realization was largely in specific, localized interventions and in terms of existing development assistance structures and top-down power relationships, and existing agency procedures, planning and skills. In the 1990s, participation agendas emphasize sustainable institution-building and processual planning approaches. The report outlines an approach which stresses co-management and institutional development in the form of seven basic principles for effective community participation. These principles include beginning with a

social analysis, and strongly emphasize the importance communication, collaboration and negotiation as part of an enabling or supportive context for building community capacity.

The other report is a Working Paper compiled by the NGO Water and Sanitation for Health Project (WASH) for USAID. It treats specifically the evaluation of community projects which have a participatory focus or which use participation as a means of achieving sustainability. The example of community participation in water supply and sanitation projects serves as a departure point for a more general discussion of how to achieve participation and participatory management in the context of broader development objectives and sustainability of interventions.

The report contains guidelines and a generative model for evaluating community participation based on experiences with water supply and sanitation projects since 1980. It discusses a progression through community *participation* to community *management*, and defines participation as being concerned with all issues pertaining to ownership, decision-making authority and control over project development and systems operations in a community context. It points out that no single evaluation model will be appropriate for all communities and projects, and emphasizes responsiveness and a collaborative team approach that promotes maximum community participation in the evaluation process. Evaluation should be not only in terms of sustainability of project infrastructure, but in terms of successes in a gradual and routine learning process aimed at building community management skills and attitudes. Evaluating community participation attentive to attitude changes and acquisition of skills, and requires that data be collected on the following categories of conditions or circumstances: pre-conditions (e g institutional support), inputs (e g training), behaviours (e g committee membership and participation, demand for sanitation improvement and leadership), outputs (e g caretaking and maintenance, financial management) and impacts (e g responsiveness and dialogue). It suggests that one assessment criteria for sustainability could be "institutional longevity", i e the managerial capability process becomes institutionalized although the precise organizational arrangements may change over time.

A process of operationalizing participation is ongoing in USAID's Center for Development Information and Evaluation (CDIE). The Center has begun to compile procedural documents, "tool boxes" and lists of annotated resource materials for participation. One paper specifically treats participatory evaluation of programmes. It is a concise document which discusses the distinction between participatory evaluations and conventional ones, and accessibly presents not only key definitions, justifications and the basic characteristics and elements of participatory evaluation, but also clearly defined steps in conducting such an evaluation as well as methods which may be used to solicit evaluation data. Methods include key informant and focus group interviews, mini surveys, case studies and direct observation. The document should be useful for the agency's work.

The USAID evaluation documents reviewed indicate that organizations with social or service agendas seem to foster participation in very different ways than organizations with mainly advocacy or reformist agendas, i.e. true Civil Society Organizations (CSOs). Despite differing political content and orientation e.g. in terms of actions to secure entitlements of varying kinds to project beneficiaries, both types of organization also have some things in common, and numbers of NGOs incorporate both social and political activities. However, an important point of contrast from both donor and NGO perspectives may be an impression that leadership is even more highly personalized in the latter than in the former type of organization. Not enough yet is known about the relationship of leadership to the majority of beneficiaries or stakeholders in specific organizational or project contexts.

#### 4.3 A Tentative Synthesis of Donor Experiences and Lessons Learned

The documents reviewed here do not represent more than a small sample of relevant documents. However, we feel that many of their findings, conclusions and insights are largely concurrent, and that they thus demonstrate central issues, problems as well as indications of progress made in the area of participation and the assessment of participation.

The evaluations focus variously on activities, projects, sectors and national development efforts, and therefore are difficult to compare directly. Evaluation exercises are clearly influenced by the policy, planning procedures and traditional evaluation practice of the respective agencies. Despite participation rhetoric, there is little evidence of participation *in* evaluation, even in evaluations of NGO support. NGO evaluations, however, did to a greater extent than conventional evaluations of core-support, bilateral programmes, employ participatory techniques. Conclusive reflections on this point are difficult to present, however, since even the latter type of evaluation in late years evidences awareness of such techniques. One such SIDA evaluation (of an Integrated Rural Development Programme in Guinea-Bissau) included a male, small-scale farmer on the evaluation team.

Forms of assistance to participation commonly are (1) co-financing; (2) framework support or Block-Grant type of funding, for NGO support, usually to donor country NGOs; (3) mainstream - usually bilateral core programme - project or programme support e.g. in IRDPs or area programmes (4) direct support funds for small-scale projects usually administered through donor embassies or development cooperation offices; and (5) policy, research or analytical work. Institutional arrangements for implementation include national governments, line ministries, local government units, parastatals, various kinds of NGOs (or 'borderline' associations such as some trade unions), community or ad hoc village or small local organizations.

It is notable that current donor/funding agency discussions as revealed in the documents clearly display a receptivity to participatory techniques and notions of

participation in evaluation. Even though the evaluation reports describe modalities for evaluation that are essentially in terms of conventional, donor-steered mechanisms and agendas, they also incorporate impulses from analytical and research work on participation. This is important in bridging the persistent gap between participation as rhetoric, and participation as development practice and partnership. Since evaluations typically are carried out by consultants external to the funding and/or implementing agencies, evaluation reports do not necessarily provide a reliable indication of how well mainstreamed participation is within the agencies. On the other hand, the Terms of Reference for evaluations formulated by the agencies do not treat participation in a consistent manner. Nor do they usually spell out *how* participation should be assessed. It does seem, however, as if participation figures somewhat more prominently in the Terms of Reference for NGO evaluations, than in those for bilateral programme evaluations.

The reports note and discuss a number of perceptions, beliefs, and assertions about NGO initiatives ("articles of faith") held by donor/funding agencies, and by the NGOs themselves, that support the positive light in which they are increasingly viewed. These of course include the idea that NGOs are able to reach the poorest, or at least grassroots levels, with much less difficulty than mainstream development assistance.

The NGO evaluations, however, seem to employ somewhat more innovative criteria and methods than those for mainstream programmes. They raise such issues as how to constructively assess *exclusion*, the culture of the implementor at operational levels versus the cultures of the beneficiary groups, etc., clearly an expression of the assumption that NGOs by (donor?) definition connect directly with people and groups at grassroots level.

Donor impressions seem to be that certain types of development activities seem to have greater potential for broad-based local involvement than others, although it is not entirely clear or conclusive from the review which these might be.

One question not able to be answered definitively concerns differences in donor approaches, and between the donor community and the approaches to participation and planning models adhered to by different categories of NGOs (process or learning models as opposed to "blueprint or top-down" models). Big NGOs are found to exhibit both models in their approaches to participation.

The evaluations commonly tended to refer to general policies concerning prioritized development principles or issues (poverty alleviation, sustainability, institutional capacity building, etc.) in assessing attainment of and/or the relevance of support and activities to stated intervention objectives. Prescriptive or guidance donor manuals which detail planning or procedural methods also contain discussions of participation, although these tend to reflect the perspective of the donor exclusively. Analytical papers - commonly compiled by consultants or institutes which collaborate with but nonetheless are external to the donor agencies - emphasize interpretive or other non-conventional evaluation principles and procedures with regard to assessing participation. In these latter, evaluations

should not only focus on participation, but should themselves be participatory in the sense discussed in Section 3 above. Most evaluations followed a conventional constitution, as "a pre-structured exercise with prescribed procedures . . . by external evaluators, which is commented upon by the project manager and provides the basis for decisions by the commissioning - i.e. funding - party" (OECD Development Centre, Schneider 1994:21-22). The challenge of a participatory evaluation procedure which "includes the same steps but follows different rules, since it is considered a learning process for all involved, and in which criteria and indicators are not prescribed in advance by 'outsiders'" is seldom taken up.

Likewise, the FINNIDA NGO evaluation pointed out that Finnish NGO support is quite separate and even in isolation from FINNIDA mainstream bilateral or core programme support. It has thus not contributed to a learning-oriented development practice as regards evaluation within the agency.

Lessons learned from the evaluations in terms of popular participation are often not formulated as such in the reports. Despite common conceptions of NGOs as operating closer to communities and to poor people, the performance and impact of NGO projects varies greatly. The FINNIDA and Sida NGO support evaluations indicate that even where short- to medium-term performance is good, sustainability is weak as are participatory elements. Despite donor agency rhetoric and intentions, NGO reporting is generally weak, except for financial reports which generally are very rigorous. Substantive reporting, monitoring and periodic assessments of development impact and progress is generally lacking, and though formally required by donors, in practice is neither strictly followed by the NGOs evaluated, nor followed up by the donors/funding agencies.

Although flexibility in planning is desired to allow for bottom-up initiatives, the combination of promoting public sector institutional development and programme objectives that are too open-ended or broad may actually mitigate against the direct participation of beneficiaries and stakeholders in projects, and in monitoring and evaluation systems.

LFA planning models can provide good methodological guidance, but are themselves in need of further development with respect to participation issues. The fact that some agencies emphasize planning for *results* may hamper attention to the more processual aspects of project planning that seem to promote participation.

Both mainstream bilateral support and support to NGOs and other civil organisations is needed. With regard to NGO support, however, donors need to review their objectives and procedures to strengthen the positive aspects and comparative advantage of NGOs, and in a realistic sense instead of in terms of near-mythical perceptions of NGOs and what can be expected of them in terms of development.

Refining "beneficiary" designations - particularly in ongoing, "old", long-term interventions that were not designed with participation as an explicit focus, might

be helpful, e.g. by disaggregating "the target group" into three categories: direct beneficiary groups, other involved groups or categories of actors who are not beneficiaries, and affected populations, groups or persons. One might then assess to what extent which of these overlap or coincide with those individuals, populations or groups who are involved in consultations or in direct decision-making concerning the intervention.

#### 4.4 Donor Experiences with Respect to Specific Evaluation Issues

##### DEFINITIONS OF PARTICIPATION AND OF PROJECT BENEFICIARIES/STAKEHOLDERS

The difficulty of operationally defining participation emerges clearly in the documents. Definitions vary a great deal, both in the projects and programmes supported, as well as in the evaluation, impact or review studies intended to assess participation. In projects and programmes, participation is often defined either very generally or interpreted to mean a range of client/stakeholder roles, few of which actually involve "an active and influential hand in shaping development decisions that affect their lives" for primary beneficiaries or stakeholders.

Refining beneficiary and stakeholder concepts - perhaps particularly in ongoing, long-term interventions that were not designed with participation as an explicit focus, is required.

In evaluations, participation is defined or at least practised in terms of "consultation", the use of PRA methods or other 'participatory techniques', interviews, etc. Practically none of the evaluations - even the most comprehensive ones - demonstrated much evidence of participatory evaluative methodology.

In large scale, multi-sectoral rural development programmes support to participation has involved support to strengthening local level administration, i.e. public sector institutional capacity rather than to direct participation by beneficiary groups.

There are clear indications in the donor materials of a movement towards more exacting planning methodologies in which a basis for the monitoring and evaluation of participation at different levels can be established early on. Some project documents from very recent years refine "target group" designations by disaggregating beneficiary or client categories into a number of specified groups, as do the more recent procedural manuals and guidance papers.

##### EVALUATION METHODOLOGY

Evaluation perhaps more than any other single phase in development planning points up the contradiction between donor agencies' will to adopt the kind of flexibility that more easily accommodates process and participatory development, and their actual ability to do so. The latter is of course conditioned by demands

for results demonstrated by e.g. quantifiable coverage or disbursement targets, and by restrictions on action stemming from *inter alia* accountability to donor governments and taxpayers.

Analytical as well as evaluation documents discussed the complexities and difficulties of measuring slow, cumulative, long-term, qualitative or structural/political change, such as in attitude and behaviour. A major issue raised in the reflective, methodological discussions of the NGO evaluations was the development of parameters for judging performance of NGO funded programmes. Criteria for evaluating these and other social dimensions are underdeveloped. Impact and effectiveness are assessed and discussed (with donors/funding agencies) primarily in quantitative terms: numbers of NGOs, numbers of projects, project budgets and funds allocated, numbers of people assisted or reached by information campaigns, etc.

Another prominent feature of the NGO material is the emphasis on awareness, on organization and on the inadequacies of most evaluations due to the fact that they reflect almost exclusively the perspective of the funding agency and/or of project management, not of beneficiaries/stakeholders.

What happens to and with women and to gender relations as an indication of participation is treated in most of the documents. Gender information is generally requested in Terms of Reference for evaluations. The extent to which NGOs really are able to reach and secure the participation of the poorest women and men is, however, difficult to determine, as is the issue of sustainability of beneficial impact and institutions. This may be due to (1) the fact that NGO funds very often go to particular small-scale projects which adopt a fairly short-term perspective rather than directly addressing linkages to the wider economic and political context. In addition, designating beneficiaries or stakeholders may be quite tenuous, in terms of disaggregation of target populations according to e.g. gender roles and resources, status etc. Emergencies and crises add to this tendency; (2) the basic needs approach of many NGOs, where symptoms rather than causes of poverty or underlying structural inequalities are addressed. Possible exceptions to this may be some big NGDOs which mobilize poor peasants or workers into political as well as economic associations.

Since the late 1980s, there has been greater emphasis on careful planning in anticipation of impact assessments and evaluation through variations of LFA models. Whether these models are or can be rendered participatory in orientation is an important question. Some donors are already in the process of refining the model used to incorporate a perspective on participation in which partnership and shared project or programme management is emphasized. However, demands for accountability and results in terms of quantifiable coverage comprise constraints on the scope donors *de fact* have for investing the considerable amounts of time and resources that are initially required for participatory interventions.

We note also a trend toward the incorporation of participatory evaluation techniques to an increasing degree. Some interventions which are exploring

adoption of a learning process approach see evaluation as part of an ongoing process of project reporting and monitoring for purposes of self-management as well as for periodic assessment in a funding agenda.

## CONVENTIONAL EVALUATION CRITERIA

In terms of the conventional evaluation criteria stated in the DAC/EGE Framework Paper, the following may be noted:

### Relevance

The evaluations tend to assess relevance in two ways: against the objectives formulated with respect to a particular intervention, and against the wider development objectives of the organization, such things as co-financing agreement requirements, and/or the funding agency concerned. Relevance was also assessed against an analysis of the particular economic, political, organizational and ideological contexts locally and nationally, within which an intervention was framed. This was particularly true for the NGDO and NGO evaluations.

Analytical reports as well as some project documents from the late 1980s and the 1990s relate assessability of relevance to meeting the prioritized needs of different underprivileged groups in local client populations.

### Effectiveness and Impact

The more comprehensive NGO evaluations by DGIS, FINNIDA and Sida discussed the analytical and operational aspects of these criteria in nuanced or multidimensional terms. Effects were discussed in descriptive terms intended to denote the nature and extent of change promoted by the projects in a qualitative as well as in a quantitative sense. With regard to participation, distinctions were made in the FINNIDA NGO evaluation between direct and indirect impact, and in the Sida NGO sector evaluation between immediate project goals and wider (national) development objectives. The NGO evaluations focused also more clearly on actor *perspectives*, rather than on project beneficiaries as a target group.

Examples of other qualitative, interpretive indicators applied and discussed in methodological terms in the NGO evaluations are *responsiveness* of projects and NGOs both to pressures "from above" (the national political and alliance contexts) and "from below" (from e.g. peasant women themselves) and to unforeseen events, problems or processes as well as *linkages* to and collaborative networks with (other) popular or labour movements, professional organizations, etc. The incidence and development of such linkages could be indicative of institutional development in a broader sense, and thus of project or NGO effectiveness. Likewise, the existence of *strategies* explicitly attentive to the active participation of the populations concerned throughout the project including monitoring and evaluation also constitutes effectiveness in that problems may be detected before they develop into major sources of conflict and wastefulness. Effectiveness is also

related in most of the NGO evaluations to such dimensions as *internal project group structure and functioning*, and thus to *organisational development*.

Apparently, for several donors, evaluations of support to the NGO sector are quite new. Perhaps because of this, these reports evince a conscious focus on more political as well as on social or economic goals. The Terms of Reference for the NGO evaluations are actually more detailed when it comes to participation than those for the core-support, bilateral programmes. This probably reflects overt donor attention in recent years to participatory and governance issues, but doubtless also, donor expectations of NGO projects and programmes in terms of participation. What is also interesting, is that the Terms of Reference and other documents compiled in connection with the NGO evaluations, seem also to allow for a greater degree of flexibility and innovation in terms of methodology than those for the core-support, bilateral programmes. These evaluations were allowed to take place over an expanded period of time, involved a series of relatively long field visits, and inevitably included participatory techniques, even if in no instance could the evaluation be categorized as truly participatory.

Particular problems concerning impact that were identified include the determination of good qualitative assessment measures, evaluating the relation of studies and research to promotion activities for those NGOs which are involved with both kinds of activities, and those involved in assessing the impact - in terms of amount and kind - of operational advice disseminated from trial and agricultural extension activities. Other problems which challenge existing tools for assessing impact are: participation as an indicator of a process of *human resource development*, degree of *partnership between projects and stakeholders*, as well as questions of how to meaningfully apply what the authors of the DGIS NGO evaluation termed *the actors' matrix*, or "the difficult sexagon" (i.e., the state; popular or grassroots organizations; local permeative organizations or institutions such as the church, unions, political parties; other NGDOs; (foreign) donor agencies; and other big NGDOs) in an evaluation methodology intended to determine e.g. the impact of big NGDOs at macro levels, and not only at micro levels.

The reputed greater effectiveness of NGOs as an alternative to mainstream bilateral programmes was not borne out in any general way. Impact in a very constrained sense of attaining immediate objectives was considered to be achieved by the NGOs, however not in a broader sense of more widespread or sustained development. The track record of NGOs as regards effectiveness is certainly not worse than bilateral programmes, and may be better depending on the time frame and extent of social, economic or political impact concerned.

It is still too early to draw any conclusive evidence from programmes and projects planned in accordance with participatory principles and methodologies.

## Efficiency

All the evaluations attempted to do some kind of adapted cost/benefit analysis. The CPT Norte II NGO evaluation discussed the difficulty of using number of staff, budget and numbers of communities and people reached by local teams as criteria for judging efficiency. *Type* of project or programme implemented was used as an assessment marker and the observation is made that basic services delivery and management seem to lend themselves more readily to large-scale support programmes than production activities, particularly in a gender perspective (DGIS/NOVIB, p. 75). NGO production projects (intended to impact directly on livelihoods and the income-generating capacity of beneficiaries) cost much more than social service ones, but it is not possible to say whether the cost/benefit relation is more favourable for the one or the other kind.

Also here, the use of linkages as an evaluation criterion in terms of *multiplier effects* and making use of a small number of staff to achieve wide geographical and structural coverage was discussed in terms of efficiency.

## Sustainability and Replicability

The importance of participation in the pre-project planning stage (when *inter alia* objectives are identified) is stated in the NGO evaluations as well as in a number of the analytical papers. Such participation, which commonly did **not** take place according to the evaluations, was used as one assessment indicator of potential for sustainability. The point is made in all of the NGO evaluations, that participation in terms of membership size alone is no guarantee for continuity or sustainability of activities, impacts or institutions supported.

Sustainability - particularly of institutions, was found to be low except where these had some degree of pre-existence, are headed by professionals as in the USAID funded Programme of Education for Participation (PEP) programme, or have been linked into a collaborative network, or even into government as in the case of Bangladesh. This is due partly to the contained nature of project support, and for NGO support, to the short time-frame commonly applied, and to the harsh economic and political environments the projects operated in.

Intermediary NGOs may be said to have a basic operational modality that may be replicable to a certain extent within the same country. However, the fact that these NGOs try to respond and adapt interventions to the local context means that such "replicability" is limited and qualified.

## ADDITIONAL EVALUATION CRITERIA AND ISSUES RELATED TO PARTICIPATION

The analytical reports, research documents, source papers, case study materials- and some of the recent procedural and guidance documents yielded criteria in

addition to the conventional ones. Combinations of these were applied particularly in some of the more innovative evaluations, usually involving support to NGOs:

### **Features of a Learning Process**

Nearly all the evaluations noted an absence of both baseline or other useful planning information, and of active participation in intervention design, whether mainstream programmes or NGO projects. Even where there did exist some form of appraisal, feasibility or similar study, there was little evidence that this was used and built upon as a conscious monitoring effort within a flexible programming system that could incorporate and generate useful new information and experiences. Weakest in this respect were most of the NGO forms of support. Here, we note the "articles of faith"-type of perceptions of donors and of NGOs themselves, as well as the lack of donor funding and rigor as regards self-evaluation. Much more effort is put into the much more demanded financial reporting.

We note a trend toward attempts to adopt a more process-oriented approach as opposed to a top-down, blueprint or delivery approach in agency planning and implementation. Demands for 'problem-oriented' or 'result-oriented' planning monitored in terms of quantifiable, immediately verifiable indicators may, however, weaken such innovations with respect to participation, unless partnership and negotiation in formulating project objectives and in the planning of project content are achieved.

### **Donor Evaluation Culture**

Donor agency evaluation culture as defined in procedural and evaluation manuals, *can* impose constraints on participatory evaluation. Ideally, some organizational changes and support to agency staff skills would promote the mainstreaming of participatory approaches, as would rendering conventional project planning cycles more flexible to incorporate participation throughout. Heretofore, evaluating participation and participatory evaluation remain, as the World Bank notes, an approach rather separate from the mainstream of agency support and lending, and left largely to "the few staff members skilled in the social sciences or possessing the kind of practical field experience that would allow them to do the analysis required" (1992:171), to special kinds of evaluations such as "beneficiary assessments" or "participatory poverty assessments", and of course to local community and field project levels. In the mainstream of evaluation, conventional quantitative methods are thought to exhibit a high degree of precision and critical objectivity. Whereas participatory evaluation is implicitly, if not explicitly, discouraged through associating it with less exact or reliable evaluation techniques or instruments, rather than as an integral part of a process of partnership in decision-making and ownership.

Participation in conventional donor/funding agency evaluations rather is embodied in the aggregative concept of "target group" or "beneficiaries".

Donor agencies are, however, attempting to loosen the confines of conventional evaluation wisdom, as the increasing incorporation of participatory techniques demonstrates. Consultations with "focus groups", "key people", "resource persons", or "key informants", as well as workshops and 'sensitization' training seem to be the most commonly used techniques. Some agencies are also exploring the possibilities of participatory planning and project formulation, as a foundation for shared monitoring and evaluation.

## **5. Conclusions and Suggestions for Future Work**

Although the number of documents reviewed has increased since the first Draft of this Approach Paper was compiled has increased, it is still early to draw firm conclusions on the basis of such a relatively small sample. However, the preliminary synthesis of donor experiences has clear implications for future work.

On the basis of the documents reviewed, we draw the following conclusions regarding how to evaluate participation:

*-in a favourable context* that acknowledges the importance of participation and builds it into planning, implementation and evaluation practice.

Attitudinal and procedural changes are required in terms of reconceptualizing conventional project planning cycles, to foster notions of a participatory process throughout. The organizational structures, administrative procedures and accountability obligations of donor/funding agencies work against the flexibility and initial high investments of time and resources required to mainstream participatory development

*-as a process*, in which evaluation is part of a practice of continual monitoring which takes place throughout all project phases, and with methods and procedures in which i a projects are distinguished according to their participatory or non-participatory origins. Beneficiary participation should, of course, be sought in all evaluations, but is more feasible and can be more profound in projects designed for and planned with participation from the beginning. In such projects, evaluation is part of a learning and negotiative process which involves donor agencies, governments and/or organisations and beneficiaries or stakeholders.

*-with early stakeholder involvement* and donor/project providers' preparedness to share management authority and to negotiate

*-in terms of clear concepts and analytic frameworks* in which definitions of beneficiaries and stakeholders are appropriately defined and disaggregated, and possibly mistaken assumptions - e g about the participatory role of NGOs - are challenged

*-with indicators reflecting these concepts and the results of systematic, collaborative analysis.* Evaluation of participation should include quantitative and

qualitative assessments of participation in accordance with the levels, dimensions, instruments and indicators of participation identified in Section 3 of this report.

The NGO evaluations reviewed more so than the bilateral ones, indicate that qualitative criteria and indicators can be developed for evaluation of participation at different levels of intervention planning, administration and implementation. While some of these may be more directly suitable to NGO projects, others could be developed for application to bilateral donor programmes. While recognizing possible overlap of 'levels,'<sup>34</sup> examples of such qualitative criteria and indicators could be: *at activity level* - e g roles, responsibilities and composition of primary stakeholder or user groups; *at project level* - e g evidence of intermediary organizations, associations or N(G)DOs in advisory and/or planning bodies and structures at policy levels; and *at programme or sectoral levels*, the composition of expenditure and the participation of beneficiary women and men in planning investments and establishing priorities could be developed as indicators. *At national level*, indicators may be generated from evidence (or lack of evidence) of change in people's capacity to initiate actions on their own and/or to negotiate and influence decisions of more powerful actors (voting behaviour, extent of re-distribution of *inter alia* income, property, use of social services, a voice in the polity, the emergence of new organizations, etc.).

*-preferably in a participatory manner* and by making participatory evaluation an *integral part of evaluation*, as suggested in **DAC Principles for Evaluation**, §§ 23-25.

### **Suggestions for Future work**

Future work lies at two levels:

- a) at a general level through **mainstreaming participation** in agencies and partner countries and institutions, a process to which evaluators are well suited to contribute (i e through an *intra-agency* dialogue on participatory development) but which needs broad institutional support of both leadership and staff;
- b) at a technical and procedural level, through **further developing evaluation frameworks, procedures and indicators** which better accommodate participatory processes.

Promoting donor and partnership learning through trials with specially conceived evaluations embodying the following elements, could be a step in developing the evaluation of participation:

- policy and operational definitions of participation
- the actual use of participatory evaluation

-partnership and an active dialogue between the different involved parties, with a departure point in the primary or ultimate clients and stakeholders.

Other elements include the identification of contextually relevant monitoring and evaluation criteria and indicators of participation related to:

*-gender*

*-involvement of poor, marginalized categories of people*

*-negotiation and the resolution of conflicts and differences* both internally and with respect to other organizations and institutions

*-autonomy* such as

(1) strengthening the rights and capacity of female and male stakeholders to engage in decision-making and policy dialogue at local and national levels;

(2) the extent to which financing and management are taken over locally, i e by partner governments and/or community stakeholders and their organizations

(3) the expansion or replication of a given activity without further project support

(4) diversification, i e the degree to which capacities created by a project for a given purpose are also used for other activities.

## **PARTICIPATORY MECHANISMS USED IN WORLD BANK-COUNTRY WORK**

The order in which the following participatory mechanisms are listed is from those which grant least direct influence to stakeholders, to those whereby stakeholders are able to exercise most influence.

### **1. Information-sharing mechanisms**

- \* translation into local language and dissemination of written material using various media
- \* informational seminars, presentations and public meetings

### **2. Consultative mechanisms**

- \* consultative meetings
- \* field visits and interviews (at various stages of the work)

### **3. Joint assessment mechanisms**

- \* participatory assessments and evaluations
- \* beneficiary assessment

### **4. Shared decision-making mechanisms**

- \* participatory planning techniques
- \* workshops and retreats to discuss and determine positions, priorities, roles
- \* meetings to help resolve conflicts, seek agreements, engender ownership
- \* (public) reviews of draft documents and subsequent revisions

### **5. Collaborative mechanisms**

- \* formation of joint committees with stakeholder representatives
- \* formation of joint working groups, task forces
- \* joint work with user groups, intermediary organizations, and other stakeholder groups
- \* stakeholder groups given principal responsibility for implementation

### **6. Empowering mechanisms**

- \* capacity-building of stakeholder organizations
- \* strengthening the financial and legal status of stakeholder organizations
- \* handover and management by stakeholder
- \* support for new spontaneous initiatives by stakeholders

The first three mechanisms promote learning and will enable stakeholders to participate actively. the last three mechanisms provide opportunities to influence and share control over development initiatives, decisions and resources. New patterns of Bank lending, including more emphasis on demand-driven approaches, involve wider applications of shared decision-making, collaborative and empowering mechanisms.

Source: *The World Bank and Participation*, The World Bank, Operations Policy Department, Washington D.C., 1994, p.12.



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## NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. The DAC/EGE document from 1994 "Framework Paper for Evaluation of programmes promoting Participatory Development and Good Governance" summarizes this work and establishes a framework and criteria for reviewing projects and programmes with respect to participation.
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3. Binnendijk, A. May, 1994. "A Progress Report on the PD&GG Assessment". USAID for the PD&GG Steering Committee and the members of the DAC Expert Group on Aid Evaluation; DCD/DAC/EV(94)12: "Update on Progress of the Evaluation of Programmes Promoting Participatory Development and Good Governance", OECD/DAC; "Update on the Evaluation of Programmes Promoting participatory Development and Good Governance", USAID 24 October 1994; "Report of the Meeting of the Steering Committee for the DAC Evaluation Programs Promoting Participatory Development and Good Governance", Paris, October 17, 1995; and a Letter regarding the Synthesis of the Participatory Development and Good Governance Studies, USAID, January 18, 1996.
4. Donor experience of evaluating participation *per se* is still very new. Because of this and the complexity of the issues involved, donor evaluation reports contain as yet few answers on how to deal with the assessment of participation. The complexity stems from the fact that participation in some guise or another is at the very core of PD&GG rationale, thematic areas and programmes of support. These and other related issues are discussed by OECD (H. Schneider, correspondence and paper *Promoting Participatory Development: From Advocacy to Action*. 1994, OECD Development Centre), and emphasized in correspondence between the OECD Development Centre and SIDA, confirming the paucity of evaluation "evidence" reported in the first draft Approach Paper on the participation theme.
5. The term and concept of "community participation" is far from obsolete. It continues to be useful, particularly where donors and programme providers have managed to depart from "community participation" in terms of a narrowly defined role for community members based on the provision of cheap labour, and instead adopt participation modes involving active collaborative planning and decision-making, and programme or project *ownership*.

As M. Yacoob et al point out, that many current strategies promoting local interests and needs through citizen participation in democratic governance actually have their roots and antecedents in early community development and participation strategies. (Center for International Development, 1994, *Creating an Enabling Environment for Community-Based Participation: Moving from Rhetoric to Action*. Washington, D.C.: Research Triangle Institute (RTI).

6. The terms 'popular participation' and 'participatory development' are frequently used synonymously, and as interchangeable concepts. However, proponents of the former term argue that it focuses more directly and explicitly on disadvantaged

groups at grassroots level, than the latter more general term. According to this view, 'popular participation' more clearly reflects a preferential option for the poor in development programmes.

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9. World Bank Operations Policy Department, 1994, *The World Bank and Participation*, (pp. 1-2), Washington D.C.: The World Bank.
10. Bhatnagar and Williams, Op.cit., pp. 179-180.
11. Schneider, H. and M-H. Libercier, 1994, "Concepts, Issues and Experiences for Building Up Participation" (p.3), in *Participatory Development From Advocacy to Action*, Paris: OECD Development Centre.
12. Rudqvist, A., 1987, *Popular Participation: Levels and Dimensions*, Stockholm: Development Studies Unit, Popular Participation Programme, Stockholm University; and 1991, *Guidelines for Consultations and Popular Participation in Development Processes and Projects*, Development Studies Unit, Popular Participation Programme, Stockholm University; as well as Bhatnagar and Williams, Op.cit., p. 177ff.
13. Development Studies Unit, 1991, Op.cit., pp 10-11, as well as Appendix 2.
14. OECD/DAC, DCD/DAC(95)5. 1995. *Assessment of DAC Members' WID Policies and Programmes: Summary and Conclusions*. (Note by the Expert Group on Aid Evaluation); OECD/DAC (USAID), 1994. *Assessment of Policies and Organization Measures in Women in Development adopted by DAC Member Countries* (Theme 2 of the Assessment of WID Policies and Programs of DAC Members); OECD/DAC (CIDA), 1994. *WID as a Cross-cutting Issue in Development Aid Evaluation* (Theme 3, Synthesis, of the Assessment of DAC Members' WID Policies and Programmes).
15. The issue of whether WID and gender aspects and perspectives are adequately addressed in discussions of participation has been treated in a number of works. Some of these which argue most effectively against the assumption that 'participation' logically or automatically incorporates gender, or that gender equality is merely a component of participation are: Bamberger, M., M. Blackden and A. Tadesse "Gender Issues in Participation", a paper prepared for the World Bank Workshop on Participatory Development, Washington D.C., May 17-20 1994; *Gender Issues in Bank Lending: An Overview*. Washington D.C.: The World Bank Operations Policy Department, 1994; and V. Siddharth, 1995, "Gendered Participation: NGOs and The World Bank", in *IDS Bulletin*, Vol. 26, no. 3, pp 31-38.

16. Gezelius, H. and D. Millwood, 1988, *NGOs in Development and Participation in Practice: An Initial Inquiry*, Stockholm: Development Studies Unit, Popular Participation Programme, Stockholm University. Working Paper 3.
17. Weekes-Vagliani, W. 1994, "Participatory Development and Gender", in *Participatory Development from Advocacy to Action*, H. Schneider and M-H. Libercier (eds.), Paris: OECD Development Centre.
18. Space and the mandate for this approach paper do not allow for a review here of different categories of organisation. We refer the reader to the classifications and detailed discussions in the following works: M.J. Esman and N. Uphoff *Local Organizations - Intermediaries in Rural Development*, Ithaca N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1984; N. Uphoff *Local Institutional Development: An Analytical Sourcebook with Cases*, West Hartford, Connecticut: Kumarian Press, 1986; and S. Burkey *People First - A Guide to Self-Reliant Participatory Rural Development*, London: Zed Books, 1993.
19. World Bank Operations Policy Department, 1994, *The World Bank and Participation*, p.i.
20. Ibid., p. 21ff.
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22. *The World Bank and Participation*, pp. 23-24.
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28. Chambers, R., 1992, *Rural Appraisal: Rapid, Relaxed and Participatory*, Sussex: IDS, Discussion Paper no. 311, pp. 12-13; Stewart, S. et al., 1995. *Annotated Bibliographies on PRA* and McPherson, S. 1995. *Participatory Monitoring and Evaluation* (Abstracts). Brighton, Sussex: Institute of Development Studies (IDS).
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30. Operations Policy Department, 1994, *The World Bank and Participation*, pp. 21-24. Washington D.C.: The World Bank.
31. Marsden, D., P. Oakley, and B. Pratt, 1994, *Measuring the Process: Guidelines for Evaluating Social Development*, Oxford: Intrac Publications (p. 16); and Guba, E.G., and Y.S. Lincoln, 1989, *Fourth Generation Evaluation*, London: Sage.
32. Guba and Lincoln, Op.cit., pp. 35-38; Marsden, Oakley and Pratt, Op.cit., p. 30.
33. Uphoff, N. 1986. *Local Institutional Development: An Analytical Sourcebook with Cases*. West Hartford, Connecticut: Kumarian Press.
34. Discussions of levels and of connections or overlap between them can be found in e g Guba and Lincoln, 1989 *op. cit.*, and in Oakley, P., 1991 *op. cit.*





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