

2003 / 1

land reform

LAND SETTLEMENT AND COOPERATIVES

réforme agraire

COLONISATION ET COOPÉRATIVES AGRICOLES

reforma agraria

COLONIZACIÓN Y COOPERATIVAS



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Le présent bulletin a pour but de fournir des renseignements et de faire connaître des opinions sur la réforme agraire et les questions connexes à l'Organisation des Nations Unies, aux États Membres de la FAO ainsi qu'à des experts et institutions nationales et internationaux. Les articles paraissent dans la langue originale (en français, anglais ou espagnol). Les lecteurs désireux d'obtenir des renseignements complémentaires sur ce bulletin sont priés de s'adresser au rédacteur, *Réforme agraire, colonisation et coopératives agricoles*, Division du développement rural, FAO, Viale delle Terme di Caracalla, 00100 Rome, Italie.

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Preface

The articles presented in this edition of *Land Reform, Land Settlement and Cooperatives* cover a wide variety of current concerns in land tenure and land reform. Two articles in particular address issues relating to land reform and how to institutionalize such reforms to promote their sustainability. William Thiesenhusen analyses the challenges facing key organizations in civil society, particularly grassroots organizations, when developing strategies for land reform implementation. Luz Seño-Ani's article looks at how appropriate participatory planning of the agrarian reform communities has been undertaken in FAO's field programme in the Philippines and adapted to meet the specific local needs. This second article crosses into a technical theme that the FAO Land Tenure Service is developing as part of its research activities in support of field programme activities, namely participatory territorial planning. The article by Paolo Gropo, Sylvia Clementi and Federica Ravera reviews the methodological aspects of this work, and the article by Manuel Alcázar Molina and Francisco Ariza López, which argues that the rural cadastre is a key element supporting rural development, is thus complementary. The inclusion of Nadia Forni's article surveying land tenure policies in the Near East is particularly appropriate, in view of the increasing recognition of land tenure issues in relation to development in the region. Of the remaining three articles, two address further specific areas of the Land Tenure Service's technical activity, for which guidelines are being prepared: land fragmentation (Fritz Rembold) and conflict management (André Teyssier, Ousman Hamadou and Christian Seignobos). The final article presents a village-level case study on agrarian systems diagnostics, based in Mali.

The Land Tenure Service has recently published several new volumes in the Land Tenure Studies series:

- No 2: *Good practice guidelines for agricultural leasing arrangements* (currently available in Arabic, English, French, Spanish and, in digital form, in Chinese)
- No 3: *Land tenure and rural development* (currently available in English; forthcoming in French and Spanish)
- No 4: *Gender and access to land* (currently available in English; forthcoming in French and Spanish)
- No 5: *Rural property tax systems in Central and Eastern Europe* (English)

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Paul Munro-Faure

Chief, Land Tenure Service

Préface

Les articles présentés dans ce numéro de la publication *Réforme agraire, colonisation et coopératives agricoles* abordent toute une variété de sujets d'actualité intéressant le régime foncier et la réforme agraire. Deux articles en particulier portent sur des questions intéressant la réforme agraire et sur la manière d'institutionnaliser ces réformes pour qu'elles soient durables. William Thiesenhusen examine les difficultés auxquelles font face les principales organisations de la société civile, en particulier celles qui travaillent avec les communautés locales, pour élaborer des stratégies de réforme agraire. L'article de Luz Seño-Ani analyse la planification participative appropriée qui a été entreprise au niveau des communautés intéressées par la réforme agraire dans le cadre du programme de terrain de la FAO aux Philippines et qui a été adaptée pour répondre aux besoins locaux. Ce deuxième article aborde un thème technique sur lequel le Service des régimes fonciers de la FAO travaille dans le cadre de ses activités de recherche à l'appui du programme de terrain, à savoir la planification territoriale participative. L'article de Paolo Gropo, Sylvia Clementi et Federica Ravera examine les aspects méthodologiques de ce travail, et celui de Manuel Alcázar Molina et Francisco Ariza López, qui fait valoir que le cadastre rural est un élément fondamental de soutien du développement rural, lui est complémentaire. L'inclusion de l'article de Nadia Forni, qui examine les politiques foncières mises en œuvre au Proche-Orient est particulièrement appropriée car la FAO se propose de nommer un fonctionnaire dans son Bureau régional du Proche-Orient au Caire qui sera notamment chargé des questions de régime foncier. Deux des trois autres articles portent sur des questions relatives aux activités techniques du Service des régimes fonciers pour lesquelles des directives sont élaborées: morcellement des terres (Fritz Rembold) et gestion des conflits (André Teyssier, Ousman Hamadou et Christian Seignobos). Le dernier article présente une étude de cas au niveau des villages sur les diagnostics des systèmes agraires au Mali.

Le Service des régimes fonciers a récemment publié plusieurs nouveaux volumes dans sa série d'études des régimes fonciers:

- N° 2: *Directives concernant les bonnes pratiques en matière de baux agricoles* (actuellement disponible en anglais, arabe, espagnol et français et, sous forme numérique, en chinois)
- N° 3: *Land tenure and rural development* (actuellement disponible en anglais; les versions espagnole et française sont en préparation)
- N° 4: *Gender and access to land* (actuellement disponible en anglais; les versions espagnole et française sont en préparation)
- N° 5: *Rural property tax systems in Central and Eastern Europe* (anglais)

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Paul Munro-Faure

Chef du Service des régimes fonciers

Prefacio

Los artículos presentados en esta edición de *Reforma agraria, colonización y cooperativas* abarcan una gran variedad de temas de actualidad relacionados con la tenencia de la tierra y la reforma agraria. En particular, dos artículos se refieren a la reforma agraria y a la forma de institucionalizar las reformas para promover su sostenibilidad. William Thiesenhusen analiza los desafíos que se plantean a importantes organizaciones de la sociedad civil, en particular a las de inspiración popular, cuando formulan estrategias para la aplicación de la reforma agraria. En el artículo de Luz Seño-Ani se considera cómo se ha conseguido una planificación participativa adecuada de las comunidades afectadas por la reforma agraria en un programa de campo de la FAO en Filipinas, y cómo se ha adaptado a las necesidades locales particulares. En él se aborda también un tema técnico que el Servicio de Tenencia de la Tierra está considerando en el marco de sus investigaciones en apoyo de las actividades del programa de campo, a saber, la planificación territorial participativa. El artículo de Paolo Groppo, Sylvia Clementi y Federica Ravera trata de los aspectos metodológicos de esta labor, y el de Manuel Alcázar Molina y Francisco Ariza López, en el que se afirma que el catastro rural es un elemento clave en apoyo del desarrollo rural, es complementario del mismo. El artículo de Nadia Forni, en el que se analizan las políticas de tenencia de la tierra en el Cercano Oriente es especialmente pertinente, dada la intención de la FAO de nombrar un funcionario con sede en la Oficina Regional de la FAO para el Cercano Oriente en El Cairo, que se ocupará, entre otros asuntos, de la tenencia de la tierra. De los tres restantes artículos, dos se refieren a tareas técnicas específicas del Servicio de Tenencia de la Tierra, sobre las que se están preparando directrices: la fragmentación de la tierra (Fritz Rembold) y la resolución de conflictos (André Teyssier, Ousman Hamadou y Christian Seignobos). El artículo final presenta un estudio monográfico de alcance local sobre el diagnóstico de los sistemas agrarios en Malí.

El Servicio de Tenencia de la Tierra ha publicado recientemente varios volúmenes de la serie sobre tenencia de la tierra:

- N° 2: *Directrices sobre buenas prácticas en los contratos de arrendamiento agrario* (actualmente disponible en árabe, español, francés, inglés y, en forma digital, chino).
- N° 3: *Tenencia de la tierra y desarrollo rural* (actualmente disponible en inglés; de próxima aparición en español y francés).
- N° 4: *Las cuestiones de género y el acceso a la tierra* (actualmente disponible en inglés; de próxima aparición en español y francés).
- N° 5: *Rural property tax systems in Central and Eastern Europe* (en inglés).

Pueden solicitarse ejemplares de estas publicaciones a Eva María Pardo Navarro (EvaMaria.PardoNavarro@fao.org), o a la dirección postal que figura en la contracubierta de esta publicación.

Paul Munro-Faure
Jefe del Servicio de Tenencia de la Tierra

Difficultés et tensions durant le processus d'institutionnalisation des organisations agissant au niveau local et des organisations de la société civile durant les périodes de transformation et après la réforme

Au cours des années 90 et au début du nouveau millénaire, on a assisté à une forte réduction de l'offre de services gouvernementaux aux ruraux pauvres dans les pays en développement. Cette tendance s'accompagne d'une inégalité accrue en matière de richesses et de revenus. Autrefois, les gouvernements jouaient un rôle dominant dans les réformes agraires qui constituaient une des principales initiatives de développement rural. Mais les institutions publiques ne sont pas équipées pour accroître leur aide dans l'avenir immédiat, et ce manque pourrait être comblé par les organisations de la société civile.

Il faut étudier en premier lieu les problèmes que constitue la fourniture de services aux paysans venant d'accéder à la propriété foncière et aux petits agriculteurs déjà installés. Le présent article examine le contexte général du développement rural dans les pays en développement; les obstacles sociaux et politiques qui empêchent d'atteindre les populations pauvres en l'absence de réformes agraires, qui compromettent souvent les efforts de développement rural faits par la société civile; les atouts et les faiblesses des divers éléments de la société civile pour aider les populations pauvres; cet article examine également un certain nombre d'études de cas.

Dificultades y tensiones para institucionalizar las organizaciones populares y otras organizaciones de la sociedad civil durante los períodos de transformación y posteriores a las reformas

En el decenio de 1990 y los primeros años del nuevo milenio se ha observado una fuerte reducción de los servicios públicos a la población rural pobre de los países en desarrollo. Paralelamente, se ha agudizado la desigualdad en la distribución de la riqueza y los ingresos. En el pasado, los gobiernos han ocupado un lugar destacado en la reforma agraria, que es uno de los principales instrumentos de desarrollo rural. No obstante, las instituciones públicas no están debidamente equipadas para incrementar su ayuda en el futuro previsible, y esta capacidad parcial provoca un vacío que podría ser ocupado por la sociedad civil.

Las cuestiones más importantes en este análisis son los problemas encontrados para ofrecer servicios a los campesinos que acaban de recibir nuevas tierras y a los pequeños agricultores tradicionales. En este artículo se examina el contexto previo del problema del desarrollo rural en los países en desarrollo; los impedimentos sociales y políticos para llegar a los pobres en ausencia de reforma agraria, que muchas veces invalidan los esfuerzos de la sociedad civil en pro del desarrollo rural; las ventajas y deficiencias de los distintos elementos de la sociedad civil cuando se intenta llegar a los pobres, así como varios estudios de casos.

Difficulties and tensions in institutionalizing grassroots and other civil society organizations during the transformation and post-reform periods

W.C. Thiesenhusen

William C. Thiesenhusen is Professor Emeritus of Agricultural and Applied Economics and Life Sciences Communications at the Land Tenure Center, University of Wisconsin–Madison, United States of America.¹

The 1990s and the early part of the new millennium have seen a sharp reduction of government services to the rural poor in the developing countries. An accompanying trend is more acute inequality in wealth and income. In the past, governments have played a prominent role in agrarian reforms – one of the primary rural development alleviation efforts. However, public institutions are not equipped to increase their aid in the foreseeable future, and this inability leaves a gap that could be filled by civil society.

The overriding issues for analysis are the problems encountered in servicing newly landed peasants and established small farmers. This article examines the contextual background of the rural development problem in developing countries; the social and political impediments to reaching the poor in the absence of agrarian reforms, which often derail rural development efforts by civil society; the strengths and weaknesses of various elements of civil society to reach the poor; and a number of case studies.

BACKGROUND

After years of neglect, poverty alleviation has again become an enunciated concern among international organizations (World Bank, 2000) and in most developing countries. In general, experiments over the past several decades with neo-liberal land policies have not produced the hoped-for salutary effects in terms of eliminating poverty and inequity in the developing world. Yet, *inter alia*, they have led to the emergence of a viable commercial agriculture sector in some countries. Agriculture in many developing economies is bifurcated: there is a modernized sector with the majority of land and a minority of people on the one hand, and a small part of the land and the majority of the people on

the other. In much of Latin America there are also substantial remaining remnants of unproductive haciendas in the large farm sector.

While the percentage contribution of agriculture to gross national product (GNP) is shrinking in most of the developing world, stimulating the farm sector is still a primary development goal, given the importance of increasing food security. In addition, a vigorous agriculture sector provides needed employment, increases the opportunities that exports may afford and adds to rural demand for city products.

Nonetheless, there is a dark side to recent agricultural development, which has negatively affected the majority of producers, who are poor, and prevented rural development benefits from reaching less-advantaged farm households. Some believe that modern farming techniques have led some owners of modernized

¹ This paper was prepared at the request of the United Nations Research Institute for Social Development (UNRISD) in Geneva.

middle- and larger-sized farms to buy land from peasants, who sell in credit-induced distress situations. Further, they believe that monocrop agriculture is causing environmental problems and forcing peasants to abandon the gardens and house plots in which they used to plant numerous subsistence crops. This makes them customers for products that are frequently imported, which in turn forces them into higher-cost agriculture. In addition, agriculture worldwide is suffering from lower commodity prices. Higher costs and lower prices – together with severe credit rationing – have brought about a cost-price squeeze that is particularly detrimental to small producers. All of this translates into more debt. From this point of view, the peasant class may be worse off now than before the arrival of neo-liberal economic policies. In general, neo-liberal policies have tended to benefit richer farmers relatively more than poorer ones (Duque Lopez, 1998; Zoomers and van der Haar, 2001).

Some of these difficulties in the peasant sector of the economy have caused an unprecedented internal migration over the past several decades. In essence, rural areas have transferred their problems to the cities and to frontier regions. Urban relocation probably cannot continue indefinitely unless city economic resources increase beyond their current capacity. As it is, urban facilities are inadequate to house, employ and educate today's population; utilities of all kinds are overtaxed. Moreover, when people move to frontier regions, environmental problems caused by the destruction of forests pose enormous difficulties.

At the same time, unused agricultural land still remains in many parts of the developing world. Ways must be found to utilize this property to solve rural development needs. This means rethinking the current development paradigm to go beyond "negotiated" or "market-assisted" land reforms. Any new model should make it possible not only for peasants to gain access to land, but also for them to acquire

the farming skills they need to be able to retain their property.

WHO WILL HELP THE SMALL FARMER AND LAND-REFORM BENEFICIARIES?

The strategic challenge now is threefold. First, government farm policy must be reformulated so that assistance reaches small farmers, beneficiaries and other poor rural people. It is then hoped that civil society can continue this assistance, or that a cooperative arrangement between government and civil society can be secured to accomplish the task. There are several mitigating factors for each of these strategies.

For example, getting government to do more may be politically and economically impossible. Many governments face domestic and international pressure to cut expenditures to meet the requirements of structural adjustment programmes (SAPs) in order to bring about a faster growing economy and a more stable currency. Many useful government programmes directed at solving rural development problems have thus had to be sacrificed. Other countries are fighting costly wars or civil disturbances that quickly and wastefully absorb revenues. Some are in trouble because of financial mismanagement or corruption. Also – and unfortunately – assisting poor farmers is ranked low in budgetary priority in many developing countries. Donor fatigue in industrial countries is also affecting budgets in developing countries. While industrial countries increased their GNPs by about 30 percent in the decade ending with the year 2000, they also decreased their foreign assistance by about the same percentage.

The general inability of government to deliver input, credit and services to land-reform beneficiaries leaves more of these tasks to civil society than ever before. Civil society, as the term is to be used in this paper, consists of both non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and farmers' organizations, also called grassroots organizations, popular organizations (POs),

and local organizations of multiple definition. While NGOs are presently the segment of civil society that is most easily mobilized to work on behalf of rural development, other entities such as labour unions, political parties and educational institutions also have a role to play. With the exception of educational institutions, however, most of these entities are structured more to lobby for agrarian reforms than to deal with issues after reform has been accomplished.

LAND REFORM IS OFTEN NEEDED TO SPREAD BENEFITS TO THE POOR

Without land reform, the chances of benefits reaching the rural poor through civil society or government assistance in many countries seem dim indeed. Social structure often impedes the best efforts to serve small farmers, and examples abound the world over. A recent study of the São Francisco Valley in northeast Brazil, where there has been little reform and resettlement, documented many subverted and poorly coordinated and inappropriately targeted government plans and projects.

Boland (1997, p. 177) concludes:

Although most development plans explicitly mention poverty alleviation and support for the resource-poorest groups, no significant reduction in regional poverty and income disparities has occurred. Instead, the development programmes spend large amounts of money which benefit large landlords and capitalist companies most, while excluding the majority of the population. Although most irrigation projects were initially meant for small farmers, they have displaced far more people than were resettled ... The number of jobs created was wholly insufficient to absorb all the displaced labour.

It is not unusual for rural development programmes to be subverted by the rural rich, and the annals of development literature for decades have presented this as a basic truth. Likewise, van Schendel (1981) comments on the well-known Comilla rural development experiment carried out in Bangladesh in 1959–60, saying, "It was praised as the key to rural

development in the whole country, in Asia and even in the entire Third World" (p. 28). While the experiment did raise production, nevertheless it was the rich peasants who realized most of the production gains. Furthermore, when the programme was analysed in 1981, van Schendel discovered that the rich found ways to defraud the cooperative structure that had been established by monopolizing credit and input use. As he concluded after studying the case of one village, "This failure of the Comilla programme to break through the existing patterns of power and distribution has been well documented. The result has been that at the village level it has become an instrument in the hands of the rich" (p. 32). For his part, Ahmed admits that the model has been criticized for not altering person-land relationships and because the more well-to-do peasants with a richer resource base were more able to capture programme benefits than were poorer farmers (Ahmed, 1999, p. 85).

The difficulty encountered by civil society in making changes that improve the situation of the rural poor should therefore not be underestimated. Arrayed against any set of organizations meant to help the poor is usually another coalition within civil society favouring the status quo, often led by well-organized landed interests that regard advances by the peasant community as an incursion into their rights and privileges as the rural elite.

Summing up a situation in one state in India, Reddy (1997) claims that

... where an agrarian reform legislation of a somewhat radical nature when compared to all previous legislations has been enacted, the role of the peasantry as well as issues involved underwent changes. From the earlier stand of preventing the initiation and enactment of radical land reform, the landlords' emphasis has been shifted to delaying and scuttling the implementation of ceiling legislation already enacted.

Furthermore, the landlords joined in a coalition with rich peasants, wholesale traders and transporters, and made it

impossible for the Congress Party to carry out its reforms. It not only removed a chief minister who successfully got the ceiling legislation enacted, but it also succeeded in delaying the implementation process (pp. 252–253).

Reddy documents that the peasantry prepared itself organizationally and politically to face the landlord challenge in the decade from 1977 to 1987, concentrating on effective implementation of ceiling legislation. But it was still no match for the manipulation of the landlords. Reddy (p. 255) concludes:

The prolonged agitations of the landless poor and small peasants during this decade (1977–87) maintained pressure from below sufficiently strong enough to compel the government to implement land reform laws. In other words, the mobilization of the rural poor is a precondition for effective implementation of land reforms ... But on the other hand, the landlords made successful attempts in evading the ceiling laws to a larger extent. They adopted novel methods to evade ceiling laws in areas where the peasant movement was weak. Therefore, still bigger efforts are necessary on the part of the rural poor to resist landlord's efforts.

AFTER LAND REFORM

The usual role of peasant organizations and unions made up of poor farmers is to press the government into taking action on putting land reforms in place through demonstrations, rhetoric and land invasions and other forms of civil disobedience. However, skill in formulating coherent demands and employing charisma to unite the peasantry that characterize groups petitioning for land are often not as useful in the post-reform period. The talent necessary to manage a successful farm enterprise, as well as agronomic skills and knowledge, may be lacking. Also, the leadership skills that were useful in pressing the government for reform are not of the same nature as those needed for community development. Sometimes peasant groups themselves do not recognize that the

leaders who served them so well in the pre-reform period may not perform as well post-reform. It is also probably the case that NGOs can be more helpful to peasant organizations at this stage than before reform. NGOs often show an aversion to participating in highly political acts such as pressing governments for power-distributing reforms. Educational institutions from primary school to university level, however, are also able to assist in this period. They may offer short courses for beneficiaries, permit agricultural and rural development issues to be incorporated into the curricula for children of beneficiaries and sponsor extension programmes.

Governments have abandoned beneficiaries in the past

Failure to deliver government services needed after land reforms cannot be blamed entirely on neo-liberal reforms. Civil society action can become so crucial after reform because evidence shows that governments have facilitated land grants to peasants in the past and then abandoned them once they had received land. One reason for such abandonment is that spending priorities change as other sectors of society claim their turn for receiving government attention and funding. These shifts can be seen in countries that have come through periods of intense agrarian reform, such as Mexico in the early 1940s, when the manufacturing sector then pressed its demands on government.

Reforms in some Asian countries, especially in Taiwan Province of China but also in the Republic of Korea and more recently in China, were more successful than those in Latin America at not dropping the land-reform beneficiaries from their budgetary agenda in the process of priority shifts. These more encompassing reforms were obligated to consider beneficiaries, because the health of the agriculture sector depended on them to keep the population fed. If farming failed, industrial wages would have required increases just to meet higher food costs,

and this move might have prevented industrial profits and brought economic development to a standstill.

Political goals and the need for NGOs

More generally, to cultivate middle-class and liberal-leaning allies, it is incumbent upon land-reform beneficiary groups to shift from the purely confrontational mode that characterizes pre-reform periods. It is crucial, at this point, for the grassroots groups to attempt to build alliances with NGOs while keeping some pressure on governments to obtain credit for inputs. Coalitions should also be forged with other entities of civil society – church groups, trade unions, educators, public officials, human rights activists, political parties, journalists, legal experts and others – in order to strengthen peasant groups' social and economic positions and maintain the security of their land rights. For beneficiaries, these alliances can assist newly landed peasant groups (and defend them in land disputes) in fending off outsiders who wish to encroach upon their recently gained land and cheat them in other ways such as offering extortionate interest rates or unfair pricing policies for inputs and products.

Accomplishing these tasks is often impossible without the help of outsiders who are powerful and capable enough to mobilize sympathetic members of the middle class, reach out to legal experts and the court system, attract the attention of the media and tap into technical expertise. Previously landless and unorganized workers who have been recently awarded land usually need assistance, however, in forging such alliances. Sometimes these alliances may best be devised and shaped if middle peasants perceive they have common interests with the new beneficiaries, for example having common interests in infrastructure projects or reducing land taxes (see Ghimire, 2001).

Civil society could possibly fill the gap created by non-existent government services if peasant organizations federate and augment their usual union-type

duties by activities related to the commercialization and financing of agricultural production, so that the resultant organization would be able to export to agro-industry.

Strengths and weaknesses of NGOs in the post-reform period

Several views on the strengths and weaknesses of NGOs during the process of grassroots development were framed by Atteh (1999). He claims that NGO proponents argue that, at the local level, NGOs are more capable than government in providing financial help to beneficiaries and in articulating their needs. They believe that NGOs are more effective in reaching the poor and the neglected, and others not served by public agencies or commercial establishments; in mobilizing local resources and public opinion around issues such as poverty; and delivering services to the needy and promoting participation by encouraging local groups to adapt to local conditions. Because of their small size, administrative flexibility and relative freedom from political constraints, NGOs are able to solve problems more efficiently than local arms of bureaucratic government agencies. Unlike government agencies, NGOs can act more quickly and with minimum delay to commit organizational resources and can place strong pressure on the state to create and implement new policies. They will also act with more empathy and compassion than the business sector.

Atteh also notes that there is an opposing school of thought that criticizes NGOs and grassroots development models. It argues that there are fundamental problems with too much reliance on NGOs. These include their philosophy of idealizing small size when they should be aiming at more inclusion; that they often offer relatively limited managerial skills and technical expertise at the local level; and that they have limited technical capacity for complex projects and limited ability to sustain projects after foreign funds are withdrawn. They also tend to engage in short-term

rather than long-term planning. Some critics also maintain that NGOs often ignore political and social structural realities at the national level, so they are vulnerable to attack if their programmes run counter in any way to governmental policies. Furthermore, they do not have the resources to manage larger programmes, so they can never meet the bulk of development needs. Critics also claim that NGOs have a limited ability to replicate projects; because their strength and effectiveness are often derived from smallness, their capacity evaporates when they try to expand. In addition, even successful NGO projects cannot be replicated nationally because costs per beneficiary remain high even though overall budgets are small.

Scaling-up and diversification run the risks of dilution and diminution of effort and thus of loss of political support. If scaling-up occurs too rapidly, finances may be strained; the support of the original group of beneficiaries may also be sacrificed. On the other hand, if NGOs do not expand, they may risk ossification and slip into irrelevance and lethargy. But any expansion must be accomplished with a careful eye to the financial and managerial resources available and to the demands of the communities of beneficiaries.

There is another issue that may limit the effectiveness of NGOs in providing services to small farmers. Alam (1998, p. 137) claims, with the benefit of hindsight, that the value of NGOs as agents of change and development is sometimes seriously compromised for political reasons.

Sometimes governments in developing countries have been known to use NGOs as convenient vehicles for establishing grassroots links more for consolidating top-down political control than for implementing programmes aimed at poverty alleviation. Coupled with this situation is the problem that a growing number of NGOs are becoming increasingly "elitist" in their outlooks and are thus far from being committed to the cause of the poor and vulnerable in their

objectives. He believes that some NGOs exist chiefly as a mechanism for appropriating aid resources to channel them to non-development ends.

Regardless of how sound these arguments may be, the weak points of NGOs need to be recognized; some can be overcome. It should never be expected that NGOs could completely replace the potential financial capability of government. But given the recent retraction of government services from rural areas, a next-best solution would be to replace them with civil society effort. Civil society must find ways to stem the adverse effects of SAPs that have brought a near halt to government services for the rural poor in many countries. SAPs came into prominence at the same time that authoritarian regimes were collapsing in many parts of the world, thus providing space for NGOs as more democratic institutions arose. Alam writes, "The advent of the 'New World Order' brought with it a new set of opportunities in which NGOs have been called upon to play a very distinct and important role, which neither the state nor the market knew how to handle. NGOs came to play a residual role of covering the gap left by the market and the state in the course of addressing the problems of poverty and unemployment." The era of globalization brings with it opportunities for civil society that neither the market nor government will be able to handle.

Need for NGO coalitions

The proper role for NGOs – and the remainder of civil society for that matter – in the process of rural development should be to supplement top-down development by encouraging empowerment and participation on the part of the poor in their own development in order to make the process self-sustaining in the long run. What this implies is that groups of beneficiaries should be encouraged to enunciate their own goals and priorities and civil society should help carry them out. The danger is that civil society may

then act as authoritatively as government in order to impose its own ideas about “what the community needs”. This would endanger the effectiveness of the organization and may embitter the beneficiary community that has often gone through the planning and goal-setting exercises.

The implication is that NGOs themselves need to develop coalitions with other parts of civil society and other NGOs to address the goals of the small-farmer community in question. While this course of action may sound sensible and obvious, it is less easy than it seems. NGOs and other civil society organizations are often in intense competition with one another for funding and recognition. So it is not unusual to see the strongest ones “divide up the pie” and the beneficiary market and attempt to exclude interlopers into their physical and client territory which, over the years, has become sacrosanct and inviolable. Part of the problem is also the manner in which donors proffer their assistance and measure its effectiveness. They may base success upon how many clients have been served rather than on how well clients have been able to meet their expressed needs and goals.

Alam believes that, while NGO collaboration with governments and donor agencies is important, “the rather close and cosy relationships which NGOs seek to forge with government agencies and donors can be damaging to the image and work of NGOs, particularly if such relationships are sustained at the expense of concern for the poor” (p. 141). He concludes, “If NGOs are yet to inspire confidence, they will need to effectively assert their concern for the real stakeholders in the development process, namely the grassroots communities, by incorporating into their organizational systems mechanisms that would enable prospective beneficiaries to be involved in NGO decision-making processes.” The participation of the beneficiary communities in the activities of NGOs would help to make the NGOs transparent

and ultimately accountable to the people they serve.

CIVIL SOCIETY VS GOVERNMENT

While the pre-agrarian reform relationship between government and grassroots liberal elements of civil society is generally adversarial, an argument can be made that an ideal post-reform relationship should be somewhat more cooperative. Nonetheless, it is the grassroots that is the driving force. The International Federation of Agricultural Producers (IFAP) in the Philippines sounds a similar theme, maintaining that effective organizations are essential to rural development. Furthermore, “IFAP recommends that all institutions working in the agricultural sector ... should be encouraged to adapt their services to the particular needs expressed by farmers, and especially small-scale and women farmers. This requires greater interaction between these institutions and farmers’ organizations, and the establishment of effective dialogue and partnerships with farmers. Farmers can no longer afford top-down institutions, which do not effectively serve farmers and which do not allow a substantial degree of farmer participation in their operations ... In a well-functioning farmers’ organization, it is the grassroots which holds the control” (Pertev and King, 2000, pp. 29–30).

All of this might be interpreted as a profoundly conservative message – that the poorest elements of society must somehow pull themselves up by their own bootstraps without much help from their more privileged fellow citizens. As Harriss (2000) has noted, part of the enthusiasm for building civil society stems from the fact that it is consistent with the neo-liberal agenda calling for reducing the role of the state so that large cuts can be made in social expenditures. In contrast, Harriss believes that civil society can thrive only in a framework of institutions established by governments. He asserts, “Decentralization is thought to be, if not a condition for such development, certainly a powerful

facilitator of it, and arguments in favour of decentralization overlap with those in support of participation." But he also believes that there are limitations to some of these ideas. Communities and neighbourhoods are often not places of reciprocity, mutuality and collective action because class and identity divide them. This explains why the community development efforts of the 1950s were so plagued by difficulties – they did not reach the poor and were taken over by those who held power locally. On the other hand, some communities may show a great deal of mutuality and reciprocity but little else that leads to development. In addition, strong community ties sometimes stifle enterprise and initiative. It has been noted that communities need both "bonding capital" – strong ties between members – and "bridging capital" – strong external connections that can be supplied by government.

Limitations of grassroots control

When beneficiaries of land reform or other communities of small farmers are confronted with technical problems, control by the grassroots may be necessarily compromised. In cases of households that are dependent on a single irrigation system, the cooperation of the users at the grassroots level is essential. But there is also a need for dependence on a certain amount of technical expertise when it comes to system design, maintenance of the system or recuperation of a neglected system. In one recent case, it was thus necessary to integrate organizational development and technical assistance into a single process. In this case the extension workers played the role of catalysts in the establishment of user groups while, on the other, they acted as process facilitators in the planning and implementation of rehabilitation measures. The user groups started as loose, non-committed gatherings and were then encouraged to carry on a dialogue with irrigation engineers. Because of the committed attitude of the beneficiaries at these meetings, they were

taken seriously by technical people. Only when a sort of partnership between beneficiaries and technical people emerged were water-user groups founded with a statute and a legally binding status.

This planning process, which attempts to combine the needs of the irrigation beneficiaries with the technical necessities of the process, has been used for the past eight years with great success. While it has not been easy to set the terms of the dialogue between the engineers and the farmers, experience has shown that technical solutions can be found that take into consideration the interests of all involved. These solutions can be implemented with comparatively simple resources that do not necessarily lead to high maintenance costs.

Sometimes NGOs avoid working with agrarian reform communities

Unfortunately some NGOs – even those dealing with rural development – consciously avoid working with agrarian reform communities. They may regard these reforms as too politically motivated, and they do not want to alienate themselves from the political parties who did not sponsor the reforms. Then, too, NGOs do not usually have the funds to purchase the input or credit that the reform beneficiaries need in order to run a successful farm operation, and they may also lack the ability to tap into government or private enterprise where these resources reside.

Civil society organizations may also have some inherent weaknesses that make it difficult for them to work with agrarian reform beneficiaries. Often they do not have adequate ways of measuring their effectiveness. It is essential to their well-being and future funding to conduct studies both before and after any interventions in order to measure what happened because of their actions in very concrete terms. Variables such as increases in income, health status or resources owned are appropriate. Instead, however, NGOs sometimes measure means and not ends, giving excessive weight to

the technologies that were adapted (which are sometimes inappropriate and do not translate into higher living standards) or groups that were organized (which may be ephemeral and quickly come apart if the costs of belonging exceed the benefits of staying together). Then, too, some NGOs may become more enamoured with process and abstract frameworks and theories than with accomplishments that relate directly to increasing the livelihoods or the welfare of the beneficiaries. Another shortcoming of NGOs is that they are sometimes refuges for former high-level officials of a former government, which makes it difficult for them to work with the present one.

Beneficiaries often need legal aid

Cases of harassment in the Philippines have illustrated the need for beneficiaries to receive legal aid from civil society. In these cases, former landowners have been known to repossess the land because they feel that the government's compensation has not been sufficient. They have used legal loopholes in the present agrarian reform legislation and have "resorted to outright violence, often with the aid of paramilitary forces, to evict tenants. Other miscarriages of justice have involved the issuing of false claims, slowing down or cancelling of legal land titles, multiple titling of the same plot, and the rapid and sometimes illegal conversions of agricultural lands to industrial or commercial plots. Such misuse of the legal system seems fairly widespread and clearly undermines the steps taken by the CARP [Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Programme]" (Ghimire, 2001, pp. 13–14). Even so, despite CARP's many problems, it has for the first time created a working relationship among NGOs, POs and government organizations. According to Ghimire (*ibid.*, pp.14–15), civil society groups have used this relationship to involve themselves actively in agrarian reform dialogues at all levels.

There have also been problems with civil society stepping in where government left off in aiding the beneficiaries of agrarian

reform. One of the foremost problems concerns resources and power of enforcement, which civil society does not have and only the state can provide. Moreover, the place of popular movements in advocacy and in generating pressure for agrarian reform is well known. The best known contemporary example may be the Movimento dos Trabalhadores Rurais Sem Terra in Brazil and the Zapatista organization in Chiapas, Mexico. But it is difficult to convert an advocacy group that mounts a programme demanding land into one that presses for actual services, infrastructure, organization, inputs and credit for actual beneficiaries. There are several reasons why the conversion is so difficult. One is the difference between simple and complex goals. It is becoming easier than in the past to muster support for transparent social goals from an expanding urban middle class posed against a weakened agrarian oligarchy in the name of historic injustice and the amelioration of contemporary rural poverty. Land ownership is a desire often expressed by peasant groups and frequently led by a charismatic leader. Land invasions often dramatize the resolve and persistence of the petitioning groups, who receive abundant press and other media coverage for their efforts.

But when these groups finally receive land, the general public assumes their problems have been solved, justice has been done and the agrarian issue has been ameliorated. Few recognize that while one factor of production has been provided, services, inputs and credit do not come automatically with the land, and without them making a livelihood is impossible. Indeed, the economic, social and legal problems faced by new beneficiaries of land are formidable. Furthermore, the leadership that proved successful in helping to countervail the government and obtain the land is usually not as adept at the less dramatic and newsworthy day-to-day management duties: helping resolve disputes among beneficiaries, negotiating farm boundaries, consulting with

government agencies on titling of property, arguing with banks about possible credit, obtaining the needed inputs from suppliers, establishing consensus on how to locate health and educational facilities, etc. (Thiesenhusen, 1989; Thiesenhusen, 1995).

There are also arguments, coming mainly from scholars of land matters in Africa, that land reform may destroy civil society organizations focused on common property that has existed for centuries. Salih (1999) argues that land-tenure reformism imposed agrarian distortions upon previously well-functioning agrarian systems that had clear and manageable customary land-tenure regimes. He concludes, "In some countries, the implementation of land reform policies has brought more problems than existed previously."

Land privatization with individual titling has become a predominant strategy for increasing farm production in Africa, but many argue that policies leading to this goal are simply weakening civil society further. Part of this strategy is the policy promoting individual land-titling and registration. Hernando de Soto (2000) and *The Economist* (31 March 2001, pp. 20–22), for example, argue that granting sound property rights is necessary so that peasants can use the land as collateral, which in turn will allow peasants to obtain loans or divide and bequeath assets – as well as do business with strangers. In contrast, a number of scholars of Africa (Dickerman, Bruce and Platteau, to name a few) would agree with Salih's argument, "... far from offering a solution, land registration will contribute to an increase in court cases and violent conflicts over rights, and hence a reduction of security on the part of those who have communal access through local property rights regimes" (p. 34). He explains, "Title registrations were meant either to serve the interests of the owners of large-scale farming schemes or transnational corporations. The end result has been the alienation of peasants and pastoralists from their traditional cultivable lands [pastures

and water sources], which has in turn resulted in sporadic conflicts ..." (p. 25).

Grassroots development and participation

Vibrant and resilient civil society organizations representing solidarity among the beneficiaries themselves or NGOs working with them have undertaken some of these important tasks of governance and management. But their success is strongly dependent upon the level of commitment, determination and organization of those who have received land themselves.

For example, effective beneficiary participation is central to the ability of grassroots organizations to work successfully with NGOs. While there is no universally agreed definition of the term, it is clear that from the planning stages to evaluation, beneficiaries must play an active role. The shortcomings of NGOs that attempt to act in a paternalistic or authoritarian manner has now been quite well documented (Herbinger, Crawshaw and Shaw, 1999). In this instance, beneficiaries come to feel they have little stake in the outcomes of the development effort. For example, after an unsuccessful experience with top-down planning, in 1992 the World Food Programme (WFP) in Ethiopia introduced local level participatory planning (LLPP), which involves a fortuitous collaboration between government workers, the WFP and grassroots organizations. The efforts of LLPP aim at involving participants from project identification to completion. The project is highly relevant to agrarian reform beneficiaries in that it "builds on the concept of farming systems and recognition of the need to integrate water development, rural infrastructure construction and soil conservation together with agronomic measures – agroforestry, silvipasture, and livestock production" (pp. 5–6).

This type of planning is intensive in terms of staff time and resource requirements, particularly in the early stages. Plans often require follow-up and

backstopping, but the payoff should come in more efficient use of community resources and in terms of obtaining more sustainable and lasting benefits for the community. Most of the benefits of this project accrue to individual farmers on their own plots. Community works are more limited by comparison. For government workers, achieving equity in the assignment of benefits is less important than achieving soil and water conservation objectives mainly through the construction of terraces and bunds (embankments or causeways). These structures have a greater appeal to wealthier members of the community whose expectation is to maintain or even add to their holdings. They appeal least to land-poor farmers, who prefer to hold their wealth in animals. This practice has severe implications for environmental protection, since the livestock tend to graze on communal hillsides where overstocking promotes soil erosion. To the extent that technical advice from government development agents is heeded, richer community members tend to be favoured. While the LLPP approach attempts to involve all economic strata in the community, there are important countertrends based on some differing goals of the actors. Then, too, raising overall expectation of only certain members of the rural community may increase local conflict (Herbinger, Crawshaw and Shaw, pp. 10–11).

The gender issue in reform

Civil society can help to correct the gender bias often brought to land reform by state institutions. It is often forgotten that women produce 35 to 45 percent of the GNP of countries in the developing world and more than 50 percent of staple foods; in Africa they produce more than 80 percent. In spite of this, they are among the poorest individuals in the population and are largely excluded from access to land ownership, credit, markets and education (Hartwig, 2000). Traditionally, women in land-reform beneficiary families have been regarded as part of the non-active

population and have been practically invisible when assistance is introduced to rural communities.

In some African countries, women do not even inherit the land when their husbands die. In Central America, the number of women who are given access to land during an agrarian reform remains low. In Honduras, for example, women represent only 3.8 percent of the beneficiaries. In Nicaragua the number reaches 9.4 percent and in El Salvador approximately 11 percent (Mozdzer and Ghimire, 2001). In most of the agrarian reforms of Latin America in the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s, women came to control the land parcel only after their husbands had died. Koch, Massyn and van Niekerk (2000) emphasize the importance of gender issues in land reforms in southern Africa. They claim, “For agrarian reform to play an effective and sustained role in alleviating poverty... it needs to have as its objective the empowerment of the previously dispossessed.” Any comprehensive land programme needs to consider the role of marginalized groups. Women tend to play a critical role, especially in the context of the migrant labour systems that have been created through the history of land dispossession in southern Africa, in the survival strategies of impoverished rural families. Thus land reform, and forms of productive growth on the land that are encouraged by it, need to play a particular role for the position of women in rural society.

Hartwig (2000) documents that there are many women's self-help groups that have sprung up in the past 25 to 30 years working in the area of rural development. Rural women are confronted in particular by the problem that their husbands are no longer able or willing to work or are hiring out to do work elsewhere. Women are increasingly called upon to earn money to feed their children and finance their educations. Sometimes the women work jointly in the fields. At other times they organize savings and loan projects, a wide variety of which now exists. For example,

women can pay in certain amounts of money voluntarily, which are then paid out to other group members as interest-bearing loans. At the end of the year, or when the time comes to pay for children's books or to purchase inputs, the interest is paid out according to the deposits made. Whatever has been saved is protected from access by the husband.

The empowerment of women varies greatly in the developing world. In India, women contribute about 70 to 80 percent of total labour in the fragile, inaccessible and marginal hills because the men commonly migrate seasonally from the hills to seek work elsewhere in order to supplement family income. But the decision-making process is still male-dominated, so there is often a void in the process, which may thwart managerial functions for a long while.

Women have come into prominence as development actors through rural microcredit programmes like the Grameen Bank in Bangladesh, about which much has now been written. Since most rural microcredit schemes in the developing world are based on the experience of the Grameen Bank, Mayfield (1998) has distilled nine "lessons learnt" from years of experience. Successful programmes:

- offer small loans usually less than \$100 in the beginning; larger loans are offered after borrowers have developed the skills, discipline and commitment needed for success;
- make loans mainly to women, who are much more committed than men to using the loans for the benefit of their families, and also have a stronger commitment to repay in order to qualify for larger loans in the future;
- insist that women be organized into groups of five with each member guaranteeing the payment of each other member;
- insist that payments be made on a weekly basis, thus helping to build discipline and consistency: weekly payments on small loans over a period of 52 weeks also ensure that the payments

required each week are small enough so that if one person cannot pay in a given week, the others would be able to make the payment for her;

- provide loans to the poorest of the poor because these women have no other alternatives, so they are much more committed to repaying their loans;
- require all borrowers to put some amount of money into a savings account each week that will earn interest; establishing these accounts appears to strengthen the borrowers' commitment to the programme and helps to build their sense of discipline, self-esteem and well-being;
- charge an appropriate rate of interest, but much less than a money lender would require: this real interest charge is generally between 2 and 3 percent a month, just enough to pay the salaries of the bank workers supervising the programme in their area;
- generally hire people with a business or banking background to be village bank workers, to whom borrowers are clients and not beneficiaries;
- develop a strong commitment to meet with the borrowers every week on a regular schedule, to give training in literacy, health and community development, in addition to training in accounting, marketing and entrepreneurial skills.

NGOs can be instrumental in aiding beneficiaries obtain credit, as the well-known experience of the Grameen Bank in Bangladesh illustrates. The idea of microcredit has spread in the past decade to many other countries.

A very recent model featuring self-help groups (SHGs) that are linked to state and commercial banks, sometimes without intermediary action by NGOs, dominates the Indian microfinance scene. The SHGs are voluntary associations of people organized to achieve social and economic goals. As Shete (1999) claims, "The Indian microfinance is unique as it uses the formal financial institutions in providing finance to SHGs instead of creating parallel

non-formal channels of routing finance to the poor " (p. 475). Shete reports that while having fairly high transaction costs, banks are able to realize satisfactory levels of profitability. This type of microfinance, more than any scheme attempted previously, can reach larger numbers of rural poor who can benefit from financial services such as credit, savings and insurance. While the programme has been in operation for only a decade, repayment on loans nears 100 percent, according to Shete.

Marketing organizations: a prototype

One of the most difficult services to provide to beneficiaries is help with product marketing. This area is especially problematic if they elect to grow traditional crops whose price has slumped and when the group is physically distant from markets. A major issue is how to help when prices are chronically low or when they fluctuate widely. What some groups have done to become economically viable is to grow non-traditional crops meant for niche markets, as does the "Network of Self-determining Sustainable Growers" (Red de Agricultores Sustentables Autogestivos [RASA]). The movement is located in Guererro, one of the poorest Mexican States.

One of the reasons that small producers have been unable to thrive is their dependence upon middlemen to market their crops. Their lot has become more difficult with the advent of a law permitting the sale of *ejidos* (agrarian community created by land distribution under agrarian reform in Mexico [1917–1992]). RASA aims to rebuild communities and rehabilitate farming in the region. The fair trade movement initiated by the Max Havelaar Foundation in the Netherlands, Oxfam and other European organizations inspired the model now used. The movement is meant to establish direct-sales markets and eliminate intermediaries for products grown in an environmentally friendly manner.

RASA has become the leading proponent

of an integrated, self-sufficient network of coffee growers. The model proposes three key principles: an emphasis on economic, rather than political, objectives; an emphasis on dialogue with officials, rather than confrontation; and the creation of *campesino* (peasant-farmer)-controlled institutions to replace government or private institutions that have failed to serve their purpose.

CONCLUSIONS

As spending decreases in the wake of neo-liberal economic policy implementation in the developing world, and lower budgetary priority is given to rural development, civil society is called upon to play a more prominent role than ever before. Agrarian reforms still play a critical role in ensuring that benefits reach the poor in many countries. The role played by grassroots organizations in petitioning for the land, often through organization, demonstrations and civil disobedience, is well known. But the potential role of civil society in the post-land-reform period and, more universally, of serving small-scale farmers, is less familiar because it is less dramatic. But it should be more widely recognized that with land alone most peasants will not be able to progress very far in achieving a better life for their families.

Sometimes grassroots organizations are not willing or able to make alliances with, say, NGOs because the leadership and other skills needed in post-reform are quite different from pre-reform requirements. In addition to being a repository for technical and management skills, NGOs can be valuable to grassroots organizations for the links they can forge between other elements of civil society, the market and, perhaps, agencies of government. To the extent they are able to connect with journalists, they must be able to tell their story to the public at large in order to muster more public support. Civil society organizations can also assist beneficiary groups with environmental protection, gender issues, education and health. But it is critical that NGOs be able to reach out to

other elements of civil society if they do not have the expertise that grassroots organizations deem as their priority. Because of natural jealousies brought on by competition for a common pool of funding, this is easier said than done.

There are both advantages and disadvantages to relying upon NGOs, however. Being nearer the people, NGOs are presumably better equipped than government at being able to articulate and act upon peasant priorities and help with dispute resolution. On the other hand, sometimes NGOs are more responsive to donors' expectations than those of local people. Also, while it may be the case that small-scale efforts work well, scaling-up and diversification may be difficult for NGOs.

Utilizing civil society to bring about change instead of relying upon the state seems like endorsing a profoundly conservative message: "pull yourselves up by your own bootstraps". Indeed, one could envision shifting coalitions in which civil society would alternate between providing countervailing power in order to wrest resources from the state, while cooperating with it for the benefit of grassroots organizations. Perhaps the most promising model is for tripartite cooperation between the government, grassroots organizations and civil society, in which each element would also be free to countervail one against the other.

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