The backbone is a partnership to develop practical activities to enhance food security and improve living conditions of the population.

The partnership may also include civil society organisations, NGOs or the private sector, depending on project needs.

Projects are community oriented, identified and implemented together with local beneficiaries in priority sectors consistent with national priorities.

Decentralized cooperation, thus, encourages local ownership and sustainability.

FAO officially launched the Decentralized Cooperation Programme (DCP) in 2002 with the signature of an agreement between FAO and the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs to mobilize social, human and financial resources of Italian local authorities in the fight against hunger also providing a trust fund project to co-fund field projects with local authorities. Since then, 28 cooperation agreements have been signed or are under negotiation with Regions and local authorities from Italy, France, Spain and Belgium for the joint identification, formulation and implementation of projects. The programme, receiving support from central governments, NGOs and private industry, by now includes 29 projects at various stages of implementation for a total budget of around US$ 21 million.

“Being closer to citizens' needs and concerns, local authorities are able to blend institutional authority with people's solidarity... local authorities who wish to join in the global quest for food security for all will find in FAO a committed partner.”

Jacques Diouf, FAO's Director-General
Horticulture in urban areas: The Municipalities of Milan (Italy) and Dakar (Senegal) promote micro-garden systems in the City of Dakar to improve nutrition and generate income for poor households.

Urban and peri-urban agriculture: The City of Rome collaborates with the City of Kigali (Rwanda) in setting up food production schemes in the rural areas and improving urban conditions of living through waste management and tree-planting.

Water management: The Region of Tuscany (Italy) and the States of Bahia and Piauí (Brazil) agreed to address the sustainable water management component of the FAO Special Programme Food Security supporting the Fome Zero Programme of Brazilian government, in the area of Dois Irmaos.

Co-development and South-south Cooperation: The Municipality of Montreuil (France) supports co-development initiatives from migrants originated from Yelimane (Mali) living in Montreuil. Technicians from Vietnam (Province of Hai Duong) provide technical assistance in flood recession farming (rice and corn). Beyond this specific project, the programme now includes the design and implementation of co-development agricultural projects originating from ideas proposed by migrants’ communities living in European and other OECD regions and municipalities supporting twinning arrangements and use of part of migrants’ remittances.

Improving food security and nutrition policies: the Region of Flanders (Belgium) supports FAO Special Programme for Food Security in Malawi to strengthen community groups, intensify and diversify farm production through emphasis on small-scale irrigation and conservation of natural resources.

Strengthening of local capacities: the Generalitat de Catalunya (Spain) collaborate with rural communities and farmers organizations in Nicaragua and Guatemala to make better use of sustainable resources and strengthen capacities for promoters and producers in support of local development.