

Influencing policy processes

Lessons from experience



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by

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FOREWORD

The dynamism of the rural sector has been a major contributor to overall growth in most developing countries, and experience shows that policy is a key ingredient for the emergence of a vibrant rural economy. The observed patterns in agricultural and rural development are more often than not the result of institutional differences among countries. This is especially true in their political systems, particularly in the way the policy process and its ownership structure, and the depth and extent of stakeholder participation, are set. This book reviews the strengths and weaknesses in the ways policy assistance has been delivered to developing countries by multilateral and bilateral development agencies. The book also draws lessons on good practices that can contribute to improving the effectiveness of policy assistance.

The current context of high food prices calls for renewed attention to agriculture and other food related sectors and activities. Beyond the immediate emergency support that needs to be given to the most affected populations, whether they are poor urban dwellers or agricultural smallholders, policy frameworks for agriculture and rural development need to be reconsidered in order to attract more investments for increased and sustainable food production in the medium- and long-terms that will improve the livelihoods of the neediest sections of the population. How to support accelerated policy processes that will facilitate the adaptation of agriculture and the rural economy to new conditions such as higher food and energy prices has now become a priority challenge for all.

As more attention has been traditionally given to “what is the best advice for countries”, there is very little consolidated experience available in the literature on “how to influence policy processes more effectively”. As a result, individual policy experts have to rely primarily on their personal experience to determine the best way to operate in their advisory work.

This book is based on a major review of experiences and knowledge that was undertaken under the umbrella of the FAO-Netherlands Partnership Programme (FNPP), with a view to identify and promote best practices in policy assistance.

For organizations like the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), which are knowledge organizations whose wealth resides in the expertise of its staff and which have very limited resources to act directly in the field, policy assistance is a core activity. It is one of the services most requested by FAO Members. As a strategic entry point for influencing the way governments are using their resources and those they obtain from their partners, policy assistance is essential to the work that FAO has been undertaking to achieve the objectives it set at the time of its establishment more than 60 years ago: to raise levels of nutrition, improve agricultural productivity, better the lives of rural populations and contribute to the growth of the world economy. Effectiveness of its policy assistance work is therefore of utmost importance to FAO. This is the prime reason why this review and analysis of experiences were undertaken.

In trying to establish good practices, this book did not limit its scope to reviewing FAO’s experience and that of other organizations working in the area of agriculture and rural development. The review team also consulted with other partners that work in different sectors, thus generating conclusions that can be useful to a broad range of agencies providing policy assistance.

It is hoped that this book will constitute a significant contribution to an improved approach to and management of policy assistance at all levels: international, regulatory frameworks and international agreements or commitments; regional, concerted or common policies; and national, appropriate strategies and policies that are also reflected at the local level.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

A large body of literature has been developed, both within the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and elsewhere, on analytical approaches and tools that can be used for formulating policies in agriculture, rural development and food security. However, the literature available on best practices for providing policy assistance and effectively influencing national policy processes is insufficient to guide those who help countries shape their policies to ensure that their advice has a good chance of being adopted by governments. Experts typically only rely on their individual experience about ways to influence policy and policy processes and concentrate more on the technical aspect of their work. As a result, a considerable number of policy assistance recommendations do not really translate into policy change or modified development programmes and the advice ends up locked in policy reports or briefs read only by a small number of people.

To address these issues, in the context of the FAO-Netherlands Partnership Programme (FNPP) the authors have coordinated a major learning exercise to identify which factors lead to success and failure in providing policy assistance to member countries and to identify widely-applicable lessons and best practices that can improve the effectiveness of policy assistance. The focus of this exercise is on providing assistance at the national level; global- or regional-level assistance is only briefly discussed when it contributes to national-level processes.

This qualitative study is based on a review of existing literature, an in-depth review of 12 FAO policy assistance projects and consultation with 25 agencies conducting policy assistance activities.

There are many approaches for providing policy assistance and most projects use a combination of approaches. Policy assistance effectiveness largely depends on how this combination of approaches is used to influence the national policy process and the extent to which the right expertise is mobilized.

It is critical to conduct a careful assessment of the national context within which the assistance is provided. This context is determined by the: (i) nature of the policy climate; (ii) political will and commitment to change; (iii) conflicting interests and views of stakeholders, including development partners; and (iv) national capacity to organize the policy debate and turn its results into action. This assessment ideally should be conducted on a continuous basis by the agency, or group of agencies, providing policy assistance. It provides the basic national policy intelligence from which policy windows can be identified and on the basis of which it is possible to design an effective strategic policy assistance process.

Because policy is a continuum of formulation, implementation, evaluation and adjustment of measures, it is of paramount importance that the policy assistance process follow a strategic design and consider human factors (e.g. communication, participation, ownership, timing and capacity-building). Policy assistance cannot be limited to providing technical or analytical inputs to the national process, but has to be designed to influence the way this process unfolds.

Political will to change policies is essential for effective policy assistance, but there are many cases where this political will has to be generated. These are difficult situations where the agency and the government are not in agreement and continued efforts are needed to negotiate and persuade the government to change its views to allow the possibility of jointly developing and modifying policies to make them more effective (FAO 2001). Identifying drivers of change and leadership methods and conducting advocacy and capacity-building for government and stakeholders can help generate the will and a domestic constituency for change.

A key finding of this study is that influencing the policy process requires a focus not only on technical skills (e.g. economics, agriculture, forestry, trade, rural development, etc.), but also on “soft” skills such as sociology, political science, negotiation, facilitation, consensus-building and conflict resolution. Facilitation requires neutrality in cases where the conditions are favourable to change. In less favourable conditions, advocacy and alliance-building may be needed. Stakeholders with the power to block progress must be identified and brought on board. Capacity-building should not focus

exclusively on technical and analytical topics, but also on the “soft” skills needed to design and manage the policy process, particularly negotiation skills.

To be effective, policy assistance requires credibility, as well as overarching concepts, models or pilots. It requires trust that can only be established from a long and stable relationship, and a strong reputation based on past successes that are tangible and credible. It is also helpful to have a continuous institutional presence in the country and good communication with national stakeholders before and during the policy assistance process. Capacity-building is important in policy assistance because it helps build trust, contributes to ownership and can offer a safe environment to discuss issues which are too sensitive to be discussed in a more formal setting.

Effective policy assistance also requires working with the right organization that has responsibility, credibility and leadership. Identifying national policy champions with expertise, authority, political skill and tenacity is also critical. Caution is needed to ensure that advice provided is not focused on the interest of the counterpart organization or the champion(s) but rather on that of the country as a whole.

The experts who provide policy assistance should be drawn from many disciplines and should combine sound technical and analytical skills with skills that cater to the “soft” aspects of policy work. Experts with a background in sociology and political science should therefore complement the profiles of economists, diplomats or agronomists, who are traditionally overrepresented in international agencies providing policy assistance such as FAO, the World Health Organization (WHO), the World Trade Organization (WTO), the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF). Moreover, the team should include a mix of national and regional or international experts. High-level technical and analytical expertise combined with considerable experience lends more strength and credibility to the advice given; however, high-level experts might also be overconfident and kill the process.

Policy assistance programmes must be managed in a flexible way to adapt to changing national conditions, priorities and needs. Administrative and financial procedures should allow for responsiveness to requests for assistance, rapid recruitment procedures and flexibility in budgets, programme duration and scheduling of delivery of inputs, while safeguarding proper use of resources. This can best be achieved by placing management of policy assistance programmes at the national level.

The lessons presented in this study pertain to a very complex, difficult and challenging area – policy change – that entails interaction between partners from different backgrounds, cultures, visions and interests. The study shows that process and expertise, and their effective and creative management, are critical factors in policy assistance effectiveness. It demonstrates the need for international and bilateral agencies to regard policy assistance in a new way: as an area where technical and analytical skills must be complemented – and sometimes preceded – by “soft” skills, such as facilitation and negotiation skills.

The question remains as to whether adopting the good practices identified in this study will be sufficient. This needs to be verified in practice and this study proposes several steps in that direction.

LIST OF ACRONYMS

AfDB	African Development Bank
ASARECA	Association for Strengthening Agricultural Research in Eastern and Central Africa
CGDA	Conseil Général du Développement Agricole (Morocco)
CIDA/ACDI	Canadian Agency for International Development
CIRAD	Centre de Coopération Internationale en Recherche Agronomique pour le Développement (France)
CSO	Civil Society Organization
DAC/OECD	Development Co-operation Directorate of the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development
DFID	Department for International Development (UK)
DIE	Deutsches Institut für Entwicklungspolitik (Germany)
EASYPol	On-line Resources for Policy http://www.fao.org/tc/easypol/output/ , FAO
EBRD	European Bank for Reconstruction and Development
EC	European Commission
EDRI	Ethiopian Development Research Institute
EU	European Union
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
FNPP	FAO-Netherlands Partnership Programme
FSP	Fonds de Solidarité Prioritaire (Priority Solidarity Funds)
GRET	Groupe de Recherche et d'Échanges Technologiques (France)
GTZ	Deutsche Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit (Germany)
IFAD	International Fund for Agricultural Development
IFI	International Financial Institutions
IFPRI	International Food Policy Research Institute
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IPPC	International Plant Protection Convention
ITPGRFA	International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture
MCC	Millennium Challenge Corporation (USA)
MINUA	Ministry of Urban and Environment Affairs (Angola)
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
NEPAD	New Partnership for Africa's Development
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
ODI	Overseas Development Institute (UK)
OECD	Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development
OPM	Oxford Policy Management
PROAGRI	Agriculture Sector Programme (Mozambique)
PRS	Poverty Reduction Strategy
PRSP	Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper
SCA	Seed Certification Agency (Bangladesh)
SPS	Sanitary and Phytosanitary Agreement (WTO)
TCP	Technical Cooperation Programme (FAO)
UEMOA	Union Economique et Monétaire Ouest Africaine
UN	United Nations
UNCTAD	United Nations Conference on Trade and Development
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
USAID	United States Agency for International Development (USA)
WECAFC	Western Central Atlantic Fisheries Commission
WFP	World Food Programme
WHO	World Health Organization
WTO	World Trade Organization

1

BACKGROUND AND OBJECTIVE

Providing policy assistance to member countries in the areas of agriculture and rural development is an important part of the mandate of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO).

Over the years, a large body of literature has been developed, both within FAO and elsewhere, on analytical approaches, tools and good practices that can be used for formulating policies in agriculture, rural development and food security. For example, the three Rome-based agencies – FAO, the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) and the World Food Programme (WFP) – and their membership have agreed on the need to use a twin-track approach to address food insecurity through policies, programmes and projects: simultaneously promoting broad-based, sustainable agricultural growth and rural development, and targeted programmes to ensure that hungry people, who have neither the capacity to produce their own food nor the means to buy it, can have access to adequate food supplies.

The available literature on best practices for providing policy assistance and effectively influencing national policy processes is insufficient to provide appropriate guidance to those who help countries shape their policies to ensure that their advice has a good chance of being adopted by governments. Experts involved in policy assistance activities often rely only on their experience for ways to influence policy processes. Many believe that their work is essentially technical or analytical in nature. They focus on this aspect of their work and do not give sufficient attention to the process that will enable this technical work to affect national policy. As a result, a considerable number of policy assistance recommendations do not really translate into policy change or modified development programmes, and the advice ends up locked in policy reports or briefs read only by a small number of people.

To address these issues, FAO has conducted a major learning exercise to create a knowledge base that can be used to enhance the effectiveness of its policy assistance activities. The objective is to identify factors that lead to success and failure in providing policy assistance to member countries. The exercise included reviewing experiences and consulting with other agencies involved in policy assistance to draw applicable lessons and pinpoint best practices that can improve the effectiveness of policy assistance. The focus was on providing assistance at the country level and on factors other than the technical quality of the assistance provided. This is not to minimize the importance of the technical content of the policy advice, which is an essential ingredient of effective policy assistance. Global- or regional-level assistance is only discussed briefly as it contributes to national-level processes.

This study was conducted in the framework of the FAO Policy Analysis Cluster – an interdepartmental group of FAO units dealing with policy – and the FAO-Netherlands Partnership Programme (FNPP), which provides advice and support to 16 FAO member countries in the areas of food security, forests and agrobiodiversity policies. This innovative programme follows the recommendations of the evaluation of FAO's Policy Assistance to Member Countries conducted in 2001. It allows for an exchange of lessons learned from other FAO programmes and partners and identifies some of the key factors of success of policy assistance activities.

During the consultations with other agencies in this study, it became apparent that this issue was of increasing interest to people involved in providing policy assistance. Several other agencies had started, or had the intention of starting, similar exercises and they welcomed FAO's initiative. It is hoped that the results of this study will be of use beyond FAO and that it will be a starting point for further collaboration in this field.

This book attempts to synthesize all the information gathered in the study. It tries to identify factors for success and failure in providing policy assistance, outlines some good and bad practices – “dos and don'ts” – and constitutes the basis for eventual policy assistance guidelines. The analysis is qualitative

rather than quantitative, although it reflects some frequency in what was told by interviewees or what was observed in the case studies. The text also has a bias towards the experience of its authors, because they are not neutral observers but are fully engaged in policy assistance activities. The authors hope that this is a first step for those who provide policy assistance to continue to reflect and learn lessons to collectively improve the quality of the service provided to those who request it.

The first part of the book provides some key definitions. It then briefly presents the study methodology and reviews various modalities of policy assistance. It then gives an overview of its findings and draws lessons in four key areas: (i) global, regional and national context for policy assistance; (ii) policy assistance process; (iii) expertise; and (iv) management and coordination of policy assistance activities. The first part also analyses implications for experts and organizations providing policy assistance and sketches possible ways forward to build on the work undertaken in the study. The second part presents the case studies that helped consolidate the synthesis. The third part deals with the analytical framework that was used to carry out all the case studies.

2

KEY DEFINITIONS

Some of the key concepts used in this paper are defined in this section.¹

Policy

A **policy** is a plan of action to guide decisions and actions based on a set of preferences and choices. The term may apply to the work of government, private sector groups and individuals.

A policy is comprised of two main elements:

- A policy objective.
- One or more policy instruments used to serve the objective and produce specific, related outcomes.

Public policy instruments can be one of two main types:

- Actions taken by the state that affect the rules governing the economy as a whole (macro-economic policy) or governing a particular economic sector (sector policies). These rules affect the behaviour and decisions of the agents operating in the economy and can contribute to establishing conditions favourable to development (e.g. investment, production, provision of services). They usually translate into policy documents, laws or regulations.
- Basic principles that direct action by the government on the economy. This includes specifying the role of government, public organizations, parastatal organizations, private organizations and firms and the principles that guide their operation (i.e. internal regulations).

Implementing policy may require new legal texts and regulations and specific programmes or investments.

Policy process

Policies are formulated through a **policy process** that engages stakeholders in producing new or revised policies within a particular institutional context. An important element of the process is the way in which policy decisions are taken. Policy processes are mainly driven by in-country forces while policy assistance processes are driven mainly by external forces.

Policy assistance

Policy assistance is a process through which an agency seeks to influence policy with government policy-makers and other stakeholders. It may be conducted in “response to a government’s request for advice in shaping policy decisions” (Sandford, 1985), buttressing existing policy decisions or attenuating the adverse impacts of positions that have been intuitively adopted. Policy assistance can also be conducted based on an agency’s own initiative, when its analysis of the in-country situation suggests the need for policy change.

Policy assistance activities consist mainly of providing expertise to help shape and facilitate the process of inducing a desired policy change at one stage of the policy cycle (see Box 1). Policy assistance is usually provided through projects that include both tangibles and intangibles: tangibles are the visible part of the recommendations and intangibles are the results of human interactions.

¹ Although the definitions included are specific to policy, it is also important to understand the difference between findings and lessons. **Findings** are statements of fact or evidence that come from assessing key aspects of policy assistance activities or views of individual experts or organizations. **Lessons** are generalizations based on findings.

Given the interactive nature of the assistance, some prefer calling policy assistance “policy partnership”.

Policy assistance includes:

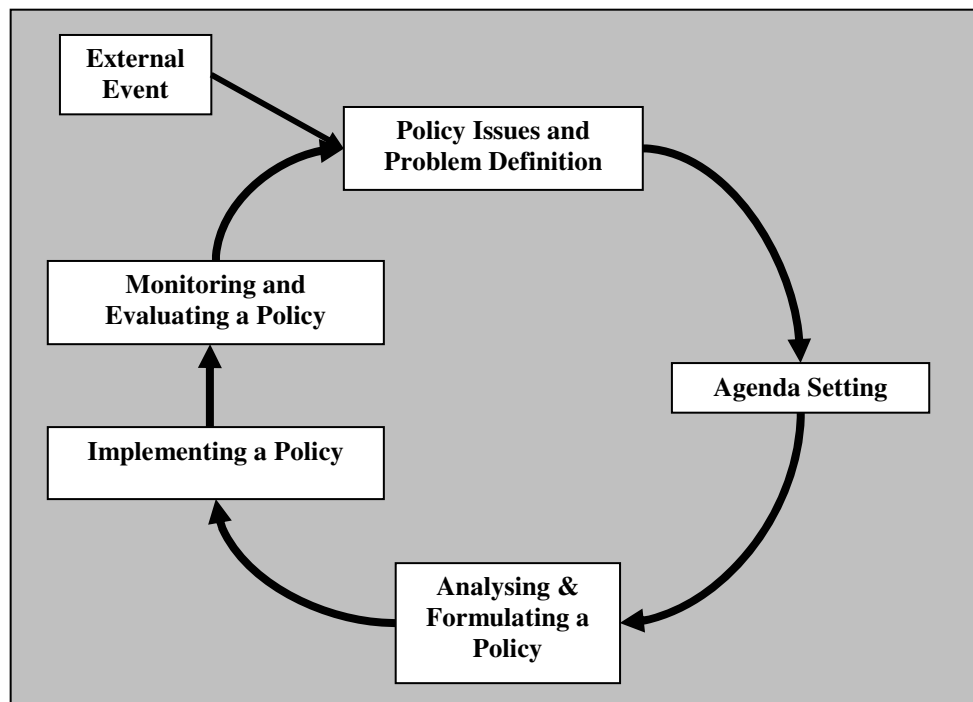
- Dialogue leading to recommendations that shape policy interventions, make suggestions on policy changes, improve modalities for implementing existing policies and improve ways to monitor and evaluate past or current policies. These recommendations may address organizational and institutional aspects of the policy-making process, and be based on diagnosis and analysis that identify opportunities, constraints and inconsistencies.
- Support to the policy process.
- Technical support for implementing, monitoring and evaluating recommended policy changes.
- Capacity-building to reinforce national capacities to analyse, formulate, implement, monitor and evaluate policies.

The policy assistance process is the way in which different types of policy assistance activities and their outputs are combined, sequenced, managed and coordinated to influence the creation of policies and the policy process.

Policy cycle

The **policy cycle** is the concept, developed from analysing policy, that under normal circumstances, distinctions can be made between different phases in the policy-making process (see Box 1).

Box 1: Schematic Policy Process



Effectiveness of policy assistance

Policy assistance is **effective** if the advice provided is adopted or if policy decisions are implemented. This paper focuses on the process by which advice affects the policy outcome, not on the content of the advice or its usefulness, which is assumed.

Effectiveness can be assessed through indicators. The following four indicators are ranked in order of increasing effectiveness:

1. The assistance helped to better define the policy issue and its dimensions (this includes using methods and tools for policy analysis).
2. Recommendations arising from the assistance have been endorsed by the government and reflected in policy statements.
3. An action plan was developed to implement recommendations and policy instruments were clearly defined.
4. Policy recommendations and related instruments have been implemented (including investments and institutional change).

Because change generally is neither immediate nor directly attributable to a single cause, it is not always easy to measure the extent to which advice is adopted or ignored. In some cases, advice is adopted after some modification, while in others only part of the package of recommendations is adopted. Also, in many cases it is difficult to assess whether a policy change is attributable to the advice provided or whether the change would have occurred anyway. Many actors participate in the policy-making process, and they rely on various sources of information when making or influencing policy decisions (Feldman, 1989; Weiss, 1977). It is "difficult then to attribute effectiveness to any one source, as the many actors, themselves with differential influence on the decision, rely on a multitude of sources." For example, capacity-building is an important component of policy assistance and it is difficult to measure to what extent, and through which process, capacity-building influences policy processes and their outcome.

Effectiveness cannot be totally separated from cost-effectiveness. In some cases where policy assistance was effective, the same result could have been achieved more efficiently with a lower cost.

Some aspects of policy assistance effectiveness have more to do with the content of the advice or knowledge; policy advice may have been used but was not useful. The focus of this paper, however, is on the effectiveness of policy assistance in affecting the policy process and policy change.

Findings

Findings are statements of facts or evidence in assessing key aspects or relations pertaining to specific policy assistance activities or views of individual experts or organizations.

Lessons

Lessons are generalizations based on findings pertaining to specific policy assistance activities or views of individual experts or organizations that abstract from the specific circumstances to broader situations. Frequently, lessons highlight strengths or weaknesses in preparation, design, and implementation that affect performance, outcome and impact." (Adapted from DAC/OECD, 2002).

3

METHOD OF ANALYSIS

This study began with an internal review of literature about policy processes and how to influence them. Then data were collected through a survey of agencies that provide policy assistance and through an in-depth analysis of selected FAO project case studies.

3.1 Survey of Agencies

Three people, including the two authors of this report, surveyed 25 agencies that work in agriculture, food security, rural development and other areas from which relevant lessons could be learned.

The agencies included:

- **Eleven international organizations:** European Commission (EC), International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI), Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), World Bank, World Food Programme (WFP), World Health Organization (WHO), World Trade Organization (WTO).
- **Nine national governmental or government-related organizations:** Canadian Agency for International Development (CIDA/ACDI), Centre de Coopération Internationale en Recherche Agronomique pour le Développement (CIRAD), Department for International Development (DFID), Deutsches Institut für Entwicklungspolitik (DIE), Deutsche Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit (GTZ), German Reconstruction and Development Bank (KfW), Ministère des Affaires Etrangères (MAE) of France, Ministère de l'Agriculture et de la Pêche (MAP) of France, Overseas Development Institute (ODI).
- **Five non-governmental organizations (NGOs) or consulting companies:** Groupe de Recherche et d'Échanges Technologiques (GRET - France), FarmAfrica (UK), InterAction (US), Oxfam (UK), Oxford Policy Management (OPM).

The questions asked of the agencies included:

- What kind of policy assistance does the agency provide? Typology of modalities?
- How does the agency assess the degree of effectiveness of its policy assistance activities?
- Which are the factors that determine success and failure in providing effective policy assistance, including:
 - those due to the environment in which the assistance is provided (i.e. exogenous factors);
 - those due to the modalities of providing assistance (i.e. endogenous factors)?
- What steps has the agency taken, if any, to improve the efficiency of its policy assistance?
- Does the agency have guidelines for providing policy assistance?
- What are future trends in providing policy assistance in the agency's area of work?

3.2 Case Studies

In selecting FAO policy assistance projects for in-depth analysis, the objective was not to select representative projects, but to choose projects that illustrate the diversity of FAO's policy assistance activities.

The selection of FAO projects was based on several criteria:

- Projects that were terminated between 2000 and 2005 (approximately 250 projects were selected from a total of more than 5 000 projects found on FAO's Field Projects Management Information System – FPMIS).

- The scope of the project (e.g. macro, broad/sectoral, sub-sectoral, institutional or specific policies).
- Policy topics (e.g. agriculture policy, rural development, trade, environment, fisheries, forests, food security, processing, poverty reduction).
- Presence or absence of a capacity-building component.
- Regional distribution (e.g. Africa, Asia, Europe, Latin America and Near East).
- Duration (e.g. less than 3 months, from 3 to 18 months, more than 18 months).

Projects were clustered according to these criteria and 12 projects were selected that were typical of the largest clusters observed. Attention in the selection was also given to the level of the projects' effectiveness, in order to include projects with different degrees of effectiveness.

The characteristics of the selected projects are summarized in Table 1.

To ensure a common approach to conducting the 12 case studies, an analytical framework (see Annex XIII) was developed which was then discussed and refined by the consultants who were to conduct the studies at a two-and-a-half day workshop in Rome from 9 to 11 August 2006. The group developed a common method of analysis and a format for the report and tables to facilitate the analysis and synthesis of these studies.

The analytical framework proposed a step-by-step approach to help consultants conduct the case studies and identify and analyse findings and preliminary lessons. General guidelines for conducting the interviews were also proposed. It was recommended that all consultants follow the same process, however, the analytical framework also offered some flexibility to adapt to local conditions.

The preparation of the case studies was structured in four major phases:

PHASE 1: PRELIMINARY RESEARCH AND ANALYSIS

This phase included:

- identifying sources of information;
- identifying all recommendations and other outputs of the policy assistance project (e.g. strengthened capacity);
- assessing the recommendations using seven formulation criteria:
 - availability of information and knowledgeable people;
 - clarity of the what (i.e. is the recommendation self-explanatory?);
 - clarity of the why (i.e. the extent to which the recommendation is relevant to the problem or issue it addressed);
 - clarity of the how (i.e. description of the process for implementing the recommendation);
 - clarity of the who (i.e. information about the authorities responsible for implementing the recommendation);
 - independence (i.e. are the recommendations independent or linked among each other?);
 - degree of originality of the recommendation.

PHASE 2: IDENTIFICATION OF POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS TO ANALYSE

Some projects generated a large number of recommendations and so a selection process was needed to determine which recommendations to analyse in greater detail. The recommendations to be analysed were selected using the following criteria:

- importance of the recommendation in the eyes of the government and/or the FAO experts involved in the project;
- status of adoption (i.e. more or less adopted);
- topic covered;
- scope of the project (e.g. macro, broad sector, subsector, specific).

Policy recommendations were then labelled as being a:

- policy principle;
- policy objective (i.e. the policy recommendation is guided by achieving a certain purpose which is believed to be attainable); or
- policy instrument (i.e. the policy recommendation pertains to using specific interventions).

PHASE 3: ANALYSIS OF SELECTED RECOMMENDATIONS

This phase included:

- describing the exogenous factors that affected the process and the policy recommendation (e.g. national policy context, players and issues and the level of influence of each, policy process and dialogue);
- describing the endogenous factors (i.e. factors determining FAO's response to exogenous factors, such as context in the project and, in FAO, the process of the project and expertise);
- describing, assessing and explaining the adoption status of each policy recommendation.

PHASE 4: COMPARATIVE SUMMARY OF FINDINGS AND PRELIMINARY LESSONS

In this phase of the study, the team looked for patterns in the frequency, strength, or significance of reasons for adopting or not adopting recommendations that could serve as general preliminary lessons.

After completing the data collection for this study, the authors analysed the 12 case studies and interview notes from the survey of 25 agencies. To do this, the study team built a matrix to associate key ideas with the source of information. Key ideas were grouped by main topic (e.g. policy assistance modalities, organizational set-up for policy assistance, assessment of policy assistance activities, exogenous factors of success and failure, endogenous factors of success and failure, steps taken by interviewees to improve their policy assistance activities, and future trends in policy assistance). The authors then clustered the findings and frequency of occurrence to determine the plan of synthesis and to start identifying lessons. After the clustering, a draft of the report was prepared and presented to a broad range of experts in an international workshop (held on 19-20 April 2007) to consolidate findings and lessons learned, determine implications for various actors and outline a way forward. The results were widely accepted among the participants and the lessons identified were generally endorsed. Based on the inputs received during the workshop, the report was finalized.

Table 1: Overview of the case studies

Country	Case Study	Criteria 1: Region	Criteria 2: Duration (months)	Criteria 3: Project Scope	Criteria 4: Policy Topic	Effectiveness	Highlights
Angola	Support to a Decentralized Land Management Programme	AF (Africa)	7	Specific issue: Land tenure	Agriculture Policy	High	Promoted a participatory and decentralized process for generating and regulating New Land Law after 2 decades of civil war.
Argentina	Strengthening the National Codex Committee and Application of the Codex Norm	LA (Latin America)	32	Specific issue: Codex <i>Alimentarius</i>	Agriculture Trade	Low	Official adoption of <i>Codex Alimentarius</i> regulations would translate into higher quality standards for agricultural products and ease integration into other international organizations such as WTO and the South American Common Market (MERCOSUR).
Bangladesh	Developing a Plan of Action for Implementation of the National Agriculture Policy	AS (Asia)	32	Broad Sectoral	Agriculture Policy	Low	First attempt by FAO to help consolidate the policy documents produced over the past decades in agriculture and poverty reduction in a comprehensive and self-contained agricultural policy with emphasis on the crop subsector.
Burundi	Definition of a Policy for Rural Credit	AF	8	Specific issue: Rural Finance	Agriculture Policy	Medium	Within a post-conflict context and after a general collapse of most of the formal and informal credit systems, FAO took over the task of supporting the formulation of a transitory rural credit policy which was eventually included in a broader microfinance strategy.
Cambodia	Assessment and Localization of the Millennium Development Goal (MDG) on Poverty Reduction and Food Security	AS	9	Institutional	PRSP / Food Security	Low	Within a multidonor and multidisciplinary environment, FAO had to help identify and shape "implementable" Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) that particularly address poverty reduction and food security objectives.
Cambodia	Preparation of Programmes to Strengthen Professional Organizations and Rural Development Institutions	AS	16	Broad Sectoral	Food Security/ Rural Development	High	After many decades of political and economic instability, FAO was asked to contribute to establishing and building capacity of professional agricultural organizations and village development committees through a decentralization mechanism.
Libya	National Seed Programme, Preparatory Assistance	NE (Near East)	17	Specific issue: National Seed Programme	Agriculture Policy	High	After a long embargo imposed by the United Nations (UN) between 1992 and 2004 that affected partnership and interactions in several ways, FAO was one of the first organizations that provided assistance to the country for the creation of favourable conditions to fund a National Seed Programme.

Country	Case Study	Criteria 1: Region	Criteria 2: Duration (months)	Criteria 3: Project Scope	Criteria 4: Policy Topic	Effectiveness	Highlights																											
Morocco	Support to the Conseil Général du Développement Agricole	NE	3	Institutional	Agriculture Policy	High	FAO was asked to strengthen the Conseil Général du Développement Agricole (Morocco) (CGDA), the think tank of the Ministry of Agriculture, gathering experts in charge of developing new policy guidelines for agriculture in accordance with the changing political and economic context of the country.																											
Poland	Rapeseed Sector Review Project 1	EU (Europe)	24	Subsectoral: Rapeseed	Processing	Low	Within the context of European Union (EU) accession negotiations and a significant deterioration of the economic situation of crushing plants, FAO responded to a request of the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) backed by the Crusher Association (not formally translated into a government's request) to support a Rapeseed Sector Review.																											
	Project 2			Subsectoral: Rapeseed		Low		Saint Lucia	Assistance in Fisheries Legislation	LA	2	Subsectoral: Fisheries	Fishery	High	To put an end to divergences in interpretation, enforcement and management of current fisheries legislation (1979), FAO helped integrate and update the law. This process would allow government institutions, international organizations and NGOs to agree on norms and procedures in the updated legal document.	Serbia	Institutional Development and Capacity-Building for the National Forest Programme of Serbia	EU	23	Subsectoral: Forestry	Forestry	High	This was the first internationally-sponsored development project in the country after the removal of UN sanctions. It consisted of developing an innovative and modern programme of institutional capacity development for the forestry sector in line with EU standards.	Sierra Leone	Agricultural Sector Review and Formulation of Agricultural Development Strategy	AF	10	Broad Sectoral	Agriculture Policy	High	FAO tasks were to support a strategy for agriculture by providing evidence-based information on the status of agriculture and the fisheries sectors, identifying investment options for the transformation of the entire sector and enabling a sufficient discussion of food security and agriculture in the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper.	South Africa	Formulation of an Integrated Food Security and Nutrition Programme	AF
Saint Lucia	Assistance in Fisheries Legislation	LA	2	Subsectoral: Fisheries	Fishery	High	To put an end to divergences in interpretation, enforcement and management of current fisheries legislation (1979), FAO helped integrate and update the law. This process would allow government institutions, international organizations and NGOs to agree on norms and procedures in the updated legal document.																											
Serbia	Institutional Development and Capacity-Building for the National Forest Programme of Serbia	EU	23	Subsectoral: Forestry	Forestry	High	This was the first internationally-sponsored development project in the country after the removal of UN sanctions. It consisted of developing an innovative and modern programme of institutional capacity development for the forestry sector in line with EU standards.																											
Sierra Leone	Agricultural Sector Review and Formulation of Agricultural Development Strategy	AF	10	Broad Sectoral	Agriculture Policy	High	FAO tasks were to support a strategy for agriculture by providing evidence-based information on the status of agriculture and the fisheries sectors, identifying investment options for the transformation of the entire sector and enabling a sufficient discussion of food security and agriculture in the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper.																											
South Africa	Formulation of an Integrated Food Security and Nutrition Programme	AF	10	Broad Sectoral	Food Security	Low	Integration of Food Security and Nutrition Programme required harmonization and coordination of three levels of government and several institutions. The project could not obtain the required commitment and contribution of national counterparts.																											

4

MODALITIES OF POLICY ASSISTANCE

Policy assistance may be provided at the global, regional or national level and with a focus on policy content, policy process, or both. This chapter reviews policy assistance modalities and trends and implications for future policy assistance activities.

While this chapter discusses different modalities, in most cases policy assistance activities combine several because they can be quite complementary. Also, there are strong linkages between national modalities and global modalities which make it impossible to separate national from global or regional processes. For example, as can be seen from the case studies analysed in this book, several national policy assistance programmes are directly linked to global agreements or conventions. Similarly, capacity-building activities or field-level pilots conducted at the national level are based on research or analytical tools developed globally.

4.1 Policy Assistance at Global and Regional Levels

Policy assistance activities at global or regional levels seek mostly to influence the content of policies. The more formal modalities include institutionalized committees and fora that result in declarations, agreements or conventions. UN agencies and OECD, in particular, act as a secretariat to several such institutionalized committees where members discuss global and national policy orientation and sometimes agree to concerted policy change.

Other examples of formal modalities at the global level include:

- **World summits** – The UN system organizes world summits – such as the World Food Summits of 1996 and 2002 organized by FAO – where countries make commitments and/or develop plans of action.
- **Conventions or treaties** – UN agencies sponsor conventions or treaties, such as the International Plan Protection Convention (IPPC) or the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (ITPGRFA).
- **The Codex Alimentarius** – Countries agree on norms for food products which influence some national policies and regulations.
- **OECD committees** – OECD has a number of committees (e.g. the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) or the Economic and Development Review Committee (EDRC)) where its member countries exchange information about policies or develop agreement about policy principles and practices.

Regional economic groups also have produced agreements and, in some cases, common policies. Examples of these include:

- The Union Economique et Monétaire Ouest Africaine (UEMOA) Common Agriculture Policy, which contributes to shaping national policies.
- In the Caribbean, FAO's support to the Western Central Atlantic Fisheries Commission (WECAFC), has contributed to influence fisheries policies of the countries in the subregion. This is documented by one of the case studies in this book (Renard, 2006).
- The New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) seeks to influence resource allocation and policies. FAO has supported this process by helping African countries develop their Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme.

Regional or subregional networks provide opportunities for capacity-building and for exchanging experiences and knowledge. They are less formal than committees, but nevertheless effective as instruments to influence policy thinking and disseminate knowledge. Based on experience, there are

three factors that are key in elevating networks' relevance: (i) composing the network's national research teams to include high-level public servants, sector specialists and researchers; (ii) developing research plans and priorities through national fora; and (iii) using a global and multidisciplinary approach to the research. (Neilson, 2001) Examples of these networks include:

- The GTZ Sector Network Rural Development (SNRD) in Africa has been a key actor since 1996 in establishing the annual Africa forum on agriculture and rural development where African experts (including high-level policy-makers) discuss their successes and failures and exchange ideas on policies and strategies.
- Inter-Réseaux Développement Rural, the France-supported network with more than 3 500 members in Africa, offers opportunities for exchange on policy-related matters, information and contacts in sub-Saharan Africa, methodological and other support for lesson-learning and network management and experts on rural development-related topics.
- UNDP has developed "knowledge networks" that help create and support global communities with shared interests and professional focus. It also conducts advisory and research activities for clusters of country offices.

These global and regional modalities all provide frameworks for policy change at the national level. They are potentially powerful vehicles for triggering and orienting policies and in some cases are legally binding. The process of translating these global or regional frameworks into change at the national level can unfold over years or decades. In areas where global frameworks and rules evolve (e.g. food quality and safety, biosafety), these processes require continual national-level adjustments.

Since the Millennium Summit in 2000, the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) have provided an overall orientation for national policies and strategies by setting specific targets to be achieved by countries in eight priority areas. Poverty Reduction Strategies (PRS) aimed to achieve MDG1 (Poverty and Hunger) provide a pro-poor unifying framework for development planning and programming across sectors and subsectors. For example, in Bangladesh, the PRS identify priority areas where policy adjustments are required in the agriculture sector (e.g. restructuring government departments, seed policy, food access, quality and safety and accelerating production of high-value crops for domestic and export markets), legitimizing policy change in those domains.

4.1.1 *The influence of research*

Research generates new policy-related knowledge and can influence policy if it is well-disseminated. Vehicles for dissemination include:

- fora for dialogue, like those organized by the IFPRI, which provide venues for debate, information-sharing, and consensus-building among policy-makers, researchers, and leaders in NGOs, the private sector, and the media;
- advocacy and capacity-building;
- networks of researchers (e.g. the Association for Strengthening Agricultural Research in Eastern and Central Africa (ASARECA)) which have a specific collaborative program on policy reform;
- collaborative work among research institutions (e.g. IFPRI has a joint program with the Ethiopian Development Research Institute (EDRI) and other Ethiopian institutions – called the Ethiopian Strategy Support Program - that aims to strengthen policy analysis and dialogue in the country);
- flagship publications (e.g. Human Development Report, World Development Report, State of Food and Agriculture);
- publications in peer-review journals.

Knowledge or research is underutilized in decision-making processes. One explanation is the "two communities" theory which describes the dichotomy between two communities – researchers, scientists and experts in a scholarly realm, and politicians, administrators and appointed officials in a political realm. (FAO, 2006) Stone (Stone *et al.*, 2001) provides additional reasons:

- Incremental policy processes reinforce pro-inertia and anti-innovation forces.
- Creativity is discounted and stifled.
- New ideas or research are often discounted as unrealistic.
- Low emphasis is given to developing clear goals and plans.

- Difficult problems requiring radical changes to resolve are ignored.
- Even crucial research findings may be ignored because of costly investments in existing policies.
- Political crises (e.g. scandals or tragedies) are required before a major re-evaluation of policy occurs.

4.1.2 Other means of influencing policy at the global and regional levels

Thematic reviews and studies provide an opportunity to examine policy issues from a new angle, based on analysing experiences and field situations. In the World Bank, for example, these reviews happen every six years and look at the Bank's role in a particular sector (e.g. agriculture or education) and/or issue (e.g. poverty or the environment). FAO conducts and publishes regional thematic studies to identify priority policy issues and ways to resolve them.

Analytical tools, when disseminated and utilized, can help establish evidence that feeds into the policy debate. OECD is trying to adapt several of its analytical tools to the African context, providing some capacity-building and organizing policy dialogue with governments, stakeholders and donors. FAO is disseminating some of its tools through training, utilization at the national level and through its EASYPol website.²

Policy-related guidelines have been published to guide policy practitioners. Examples include UNESCO's guidelines for formulating policy with the active participation of stakeholders in the civil society, its institutions and industry and UNDP's guidelines for HIV/AIDS policy development, strategic planning and response management.

Policy advocacy is a means to mobilize attention to a particular policy issue. (Porter, 1995) Systematically mobilizing attention is best achieved through broad-based advocacy coalitions. UN organizations are active in global advocacy. They play an advocacy role for MDGs (e.g. UNDP), advocate in favour of allocating budgets to a particular sector (e.g. UNESCO for education, FAO for agriculture, UNICEF for social services) or draw attention to special issues (e.g. UNDP on HIV/AIDS strategies and the vulnerability of women and girls, FAO on the right to food). Advocacy can also be field-based. For example, Oxfam usually works first with local and grassroots partners and then uses local experience to influence the government through advocacy campaigns.

Box 2: UNICEF and advocacy

UNICEF has developed a strong capacity in policy advocacy and influences policy decision-making at both the national and multilateral levels. These policy-advocacy and dialogue activities have yielded important policy agendas, such as the Bamako initiative, the child rights agenda, and girls' education. UNICEF has also strongly advocated in favour of the "build back better approach" in post-conflict and post-disaster situations. This approach is seeing in post-disaster and post-conflict interventions as opportunities to introduce important policy change. Examples vary from better infrastructure, to better public systems, as well as introduction or modification of legal frameworks.

For example, UNICEF is leading the "20/20 Initiative," which calls for allocating 20 percent of donor aid and 20 percent of the national budget in developing countries to basic social services. Implementing the 20/20 Initiative at the national level is pursued through an effective policy-advocacy strategy to induce policy change in favour of social service investment to benefit children and the poor. In addition to seeking technical assistance from UNICEF, countries now seek UNICEF support to promote a policy agenda through advocacy.

Media (e.g. radio broadcasts and newspaper articles) are used to inform stakeholders and the general population about advocacy, to increase awareness and to sensitize people to key issues.

² EASYPol - On-line Resources for Policy: <http://www.fao.org/tc/easypol/output/>

Involvement in policy assistance activities at the global and regional levels is essential to influencing policy thinking and practice at the national level. It can also contribute to the reputation and credibility of a particular institution that provides policy assistance.

4.2 Policy Assistance at the National Level

Policy assistance modalities at the national level are reviewed here only briefly because the remainder of the paper focuses on national-level policy assistance. Policy assistance at the national level addresses both policy content and process.

When focused on policy content, policy assistance may be either general (e.g. policy reviews, sector or subsector policy formulation) or technically-specialized (e.g. advice on food quality and biosafety or seed policy) and it often includes efforts to align national legislation with modified policies.

When focused on policy process, policy assistance may be in support of a specific policy process. Examples include the process of accession to an international organization (e.g. WTO) or treaty (e.g. ITPGRFA), changing the way policies are formulated (i.e. helping to establish a participatory policy process that includes farmer organizations, the private sector and other stakeholders) or assisting in institutional reform, including establishing a specialized strategic or policy unit. When there is disagreement among stakeholders, there may also be a need for facilitation and brokering services to help stakeholders resolve their disagreements and come to a consensus.

Modalities of advice on process may include promoting leadership methods. For example, UNDP is providing support to processes for democratic transition, with a particular focus on human rights, gender equality, equal access, representation, participation and transparency. Technical advice includes support for legislative, electoral and judicial reforms, civil service reforms, decentralization and participatory local governance, information access, citizen participation and accountability, good practices in anti-corruption strategies and mechanisms for transparency and national capacity-building to negotiate more equitable and participatory rules.

In some cases, support can be provided for coordinating policy implementation. In the case studies prepared for this lesson-learning exercise in South Africa and Sierra Leone, several organizations requested assistance in coordinating their actions.

4.3 Means of influencing policy at the national level

A variety of modalities are used at the national level to provide assistance on both policy content and policy process:

Policy advocacy raises awareness about issues and the need to change policies to address them. This can be linked to a particular national situation or to an important international or global issue. For example, FAO, although reputed to be an independent and neutral organization, does have an agenda and a mandate, determined by its member countries, to fight against hunger and it therefore conducts related policy-advocacy activities.

Policy reviews (e.g. conducted by OECD, FAO, UNCTAD or WTO) analyse existing policies to identify areas where policy improvement or change is needed. Policy reviews usually have a fairly broad scope. In OECD, for example, the Agricultural Directorate has been conducting studies on policy indicators in eight advanced developing countries. The policy review is based on work done by local consultants who spend time at OECD Headquarters in Paris for training and exposure. Towards the end of the review, round-table discussions are held with concerned governments and OECD countries which then leads to an official OECD report that advises on policy changes. This type of work generally leads to broad sectoral or subsectoral policy advice.

Policy projects are probably the most widely-used approach to providing policy assistance. They vary greatly in focus and duration. They are usually conducted based on an agreement with the government of the beneficiary country, or, in some cases, with one of the national stakeholders (e.g. farmer organizations). They are often part of a larger policy assistance process that may be comprised of a series of policy projects or other policy assistance approaches.

Field-level pilots are used to test policies that can be implemented on a small scale (e.g. approaches in natural resources management, extension, research and others). Experience gained through pilots can be reflected in “experience-based” policy advice. Local and regional pilots help test ideas and generate local knowledge that can more effectively convince policy-makers than can theoretical arguments or experience from elsewhere. Pilots have the advantage of being very concrete and showing immediate results, compared to broader policy work which sometimes may seem too “theoretical” to government counterparts. (See Box 3)

Capacity-building is an effective means to influence policy thinking, strengthen capacity to conduct analysis, drive policy processes and implement policy change. The evaluation conducted by CIRAD of France’s policy projects conducted under its Fonds de Solidarité Prioritaire (Priority Solidarity Funds or FSP) emphasizes the fundamental need for and role of capacity-building in policy assistance. Capacity-building includes:

- supporting government organizations in managing and coordinating agriculture policy;
- developing the capacity of other actors to participate in the policy process and become co-producers and co-managers of public policies;
- facilitating dialogue among various stakeholders.

The evaluation of FAO’s policy assistance activities also stresses the key role of capacity-building. Capacity-building can be conducted through:

- formal or on-the-job training to develop skills;
- institutional development to strengthen the institutional setup within which policy is made;
- modifying the rules governing policy-making.

OECD, for example, has organized internships at its headquarters in Paris for experts of African countries where it was conducting policy reviews and FAO has provided advice on institutional arrangements for policy formulation in many countries. Training is acknowledged as an effective way of disseminating and increasing the use of tools and guidelines for policy analysis and formulation and can be linked to institutional capacity-building.

Box 3: Field-level pilots

Field-level pilots are being increasingly used by a number of organizations:

- **GRET** conducts field activities with policy implications (e.g. about water in Cambodia where drinking water projects are developed within public-private partnerships).
- **UNESCO** implements pilot projects to test ideas before drawing policy implications.
- **UNICEF** sees an important role to be played in policy assistance by scaling up a good NGO practice, replicating local-level experience within and among countries and mutual learning across countries.
- **Oxfam** believes that showing evidence at the field level increases credibility, which is necessary to be heard and able to influence national policy processes. However, the project has to be big enough to be seen as providing significant experience. An example of a project where Oxfam was very influential is the arid land project in Kenya.
- **GTZ** long-term sector programmes combine field activities (often pilots), subnational activities and central policy-advisory activities.

Sector programmes involve formulating policy goals for a particular sector and disbursing pre-established amounts of funds from a common fund upon achievement of committed policy results. The launching of sector programmes is generally preceded by extensive discussions on policy and operational procedures. In spite of initial enthusiasm with this instrument as a means to cut through red-tape and micromanagement, it is proving challenging. This approach requires a degree of flexibility from each participant donor that runs counter to the often increasing number of in-house control mechanisms.

Non-project financial assistance, such as budget support or Non-project Assistance (NPA), (which is currently being tried by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) through the Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC)) is a new policy assistance instrument whereby the donor agrees with the recipient country on a series of policy targets or objectives to be delivered against an overall amount of untied funds that are delivered in tranches upon verification of compliance.

National research institutes or think tanks can play an important role in national policy processes. Supporting them and strengthening their capacity may have considerable implications for national policies in the medium and long term. The example of DIE, the German Economic Institute in Bonn (Box 4), illustrates the role that national research institutes can play in the policy process.

Box 4: How research institutes can influence policy

The DIE, in Germany:

- conducts studies or prepares papers on specific topics;
- helps organize or supports policy processes which involve different stakeholders (e.g. government ministries, NGOs and Civil Society Organizations (CSOs));
- provides a sound basis or arguments for ideas generated within government and helps mainstream them;
- conducts a training programme for government officials and manages a network of alumni in different ministries and national agencies;
- provides resource persons for policy-related work;
- monitors the policy context to identify windows of opportunity to provide advice on new issues;
- exchanges staff with government organizations (i.e. junior government staff and sometimes senior, retired civil servants spend time working in DIE).

4.4 Future Trends in Policy Assistance

Approaches to providing policy assistance have subtly evolved and this evolution can be expected to continue in the future. Capacity is a key factor in the evolution of policy assistance modalities. Many of the future trends can already be seen by comparing the policy assistance modalities used in more advanced countries that have higher capacity with those used in countries that have more limited capacity.

The evolution of aid modalities also will influence relations between countries and their development partners. Less aid will be channelled through projects and more through budget support and sector programmes that create opportunities for policy dialogue. There is an increasing awareness that, at the national level, “soft” skills such as facilitation, negotiation and understanding of the political and social dimensions of policy processes are important for institutions and experts providing policy assistance.

Countries receiving policy assistance are increasingly demanding high-quality content and process advice. Furthermore, as policy assistance gradually becomes more knowledge-based and more geared towards changing people’s mindset and attitudes, there will be greater need for and focus on research, dissemination of research results, outreach and capacity-building. Countries’ expectations for methods and processes also will increase. For example, more demand is expected for training on facilitation of participatory processes in policy formulation and implementation, conflict resolution and prevention, and negotiation of policy processes. Moreover, the stronger competition and convergence of policy assistance modalities will require agencies to increasingly specialize in their areas of excellence.

Based on these preliminary considerations, it can be expected that in the future there will be less use of long-term resident policy advisors and less policy assistance based on policy projects and direct policy and technical assistance programmes.

Future trends in policy assistance will likely include:

- knowledge management and capacity-building through activities of regional or global networks;
- intergovernmental fora or advocacy directed at regional or subregional groups and organizations;
- use of national expertise, including national policy centres and institutes or think tanks;
- assistance in negotiating global agreements and conventions and applying them for the benefit of a country;
- involving the private sector (multinational and national) and NGOs in the policy process;
- understanding drivers of change;
- supporting implementation of complex policy programmes;
- continuous policy dialogue with governments for ongoing monitoring of policy context and climate;
- support to sector programmes, including budget support or large technical assistance programmes.

Box 5: Implications for organizations providing policy assistance

Organizations that provide policy assistance in the future will need to:

- be actively involved in new aid modalities to take part in the policy dialogue;
- strengthen their policy capacity by giving opportunities to staff and consultants to develop their skills (e.g. technical, analytical and “soft” skills) and to capitalize on lessons learned from their experiences;
- develop their research activities and publications on focused themes within internationally-recognized networks;
- be actively involved in activities of regional or global networks for knowledge management and capacity-building, to contribute to their reputation and credibility;
- develop their ability to support capacity-building activities in technical and process areas in their policy assistance programmes;
- develop capacity in “soft” skills (e.g. facilitation, negotiation, and understanding the political and social dimensions), as well as “hard” technical skills in their areas of specialization (e.g. agriculture, rural development and food security).

For small organizations, a *sine qua non* is to ensure high-quality, specificity and excellence in the content and process of their policy assistance.

4.5 Conclusions and Lessons on Modalities

- i. There is a great diversity of modalities for providing policy assistance. Global and regional modalities are the main venue where the “dominant” policy thinking and discourse is produced. They increasingly influence both the policy content and process at country level.
- ii. With the development of policy-related technical capacity at national level, global and regional modalities gain in importance.
- iii. There is an increasing awareness that, at the country level, “soft” skills such as facilitation, negotiation and understanding of the political dimension of policy processes, are important for institutions and experts providing policy assistance.

5

MAIN FINDINGS AND LESSONS

5.1 Global, Regional and National Context

5.1.1 *The international context as driving force of policy change*

Globalization and the increased importance of policy

The evaluation of FAO's policy assistance to member countries (FAO, 2001) "found that policy was an increasingly important area for developing countries". It underscores that "the place of policy on the development agenda has been steadily increasing in importance...the pace of globalization has meant that if countries are to reap its benefits, rather than suffer from its disadvantages, they must restructure their economies to maximize trade opportunities and introduce national measures in line with their international commitments." It continues by advising that "FAO should accord its work in this area greater overall priority".

This trend of giving greater importance and increased priority to policy assistance is acknowledged by most institutions contacted in this study. Even organizations that are known for their field-level activities, such as UNICEF or Oxfam, are now turning more towards policy advocacy and assistance.

The influence of global and regional agreements

Global and regional agreements and conventions often constitute driving forces for policy change at the national level through processes that can span years and even decades. The following examples, selected among many, illustrate how global agreements and processes can act as triggers and determine the nature and content of policy change at the national level. They create opportunities for policy change, contribute to its legitimacy and justification and limit unfettered decision-making and choice by governments. Information or training on these agreements can be a starting point for influencing the policy process. However, in some cases, contradictions among global agreements can become a constraint and create confusion.

Global issues which have not yet led to agreements, either because there is no consensus or because they have gained importance only recently, also can be a source of policy change (e.g. climate change and negotiation processes towards more regional integration).

Box 6: Policy assistance in the fisheries sector in the Caribbean

"Policy assistance in the fisheries sector in a region such as the insular Caribbean (where there is a commitment to promote regional or subregional approaches or instruments) is the process whereby states, regional institutions and other local actors are helped to understand, cope with, minimize the negative impacts of, and, if possible, derive benefits from, a global policy environment that is constantly changing and increasing its power and impacts on small economies and societies." (Renard, 2006) In the fisheries sector in the Caribbean, this process lasted more than two decades and FAO's policy assistance has been effective and beneficial for a number of reasons including:

- the use of a regional institutional set-up. WECAFC was a forum and mechanism for exchanging information and harmonizing policies;
- the integration of FAO's policy assistance into the activities and processes that were led and sponsored by other organizations or partners;
- the provision of explicit and implicit support to strengthen regional institutions and their roles as coordinators and facilitators.

Box 7: The influence of international agreements on policy

In Serbia, the national Serbian leadership's stated strategic objectives of achieving accession to the EU and of transitioning to a market-oriented economy created strong incentives throughout all levels of the Serbian government to adopt international standards and practices. These national objectives created additional support for bringing greater emphasis to private forestry and to complying with international standards of forestry management (including principles of conservation and sustainability), a change that was supported by an FAO policy assistance project.

In Argentina, and in Bangladesh, the need to comply with international standards for export commodities was key factors behind FAO's support. FAO's project in Argentina during the late 1990s aimed to strengthen the national *Codex Alimentarius* committee to better equip it to align Argentina's national food regulations with the international norms established under the WTO's Sanitary and Phytosanitary Agreement (SPS) and the FAO/WHO *Codex Alimentarius*. Also, because Argentina became the chair of the regional commission for the *Codex Alimentarius* and Bangladesh became actively involved in regional and global agreements and conventions, their governments wished to project a positive image of their countries at regional and international levels.

MDGs as benchmarks for policy change

MDGs have been a useful tool to establish clear benchmarks and quantifiable objectives at the national level. As quantifiable benchmarks, they help governments agree on policy objectives with their partners and provide verifiable quantitative data that facilitate policy advice, monitoring and accountability.

MDGs help set national priorities. UNICEF, for example, sees them as very instrumental in increasing governments' attention to the poor, the excluded and children. MDGs can be a reference for policy-advocacy work or can constitute a starting point for a policy dialogue with governments, particularly in countries emerging from crisis situations which need to re-focus on development objectives.

Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs) increasingly serve as instruments to translate a commitment to achieve MDG1 into an action framework with concrete actions at the national level. They help set priorities and provide a more detailed framework to guide specialized policy assistance.

In Bhutan (FAO, 2006), for example, the preparation of the tenth Five-Year Plan has been an opportunity to debate policy and strategic measures to reduce poverty and hunger, consistent with MDG commitments. This has led to including food security considerations into the Plan and reviewing or formulating strategies or policies, with the help of FAO through its FNPP.

As emphasized by several organizations interviewed during the study, challenges remain on how to monitor and evaluate the achievement of MDGs and the implementation of PRSPs.

New aid modalities change the nature of policy dialogue

With the progressive evolution of aid from project-based aid to new aid modalities (e.g. budget support or sector-wide approaches), strategic and policy discussions between governments and their development partners become more prominent. These modalities affect the policy process at the national level and, in many cases, the content of policies as well.

In Mozambique, for example, the appraisal of the first sector programme for agriculture (PROAGRI I) in 1998 necessitated a two-week policy and strategic dialogue among more than 15 participating development partners and the government. Several areas of discussion led to specific policy and institutional reforms for which policy support was provided by different partners.

In other sectors, such as education or health, sector-wide approaches are even more frequently adopted and appear to be simpler to manage and more successful than in agriculture. Challenges remain, such as the complexity of coordinating among development partners due to differences in their programmatic agendas. As stated by some development partners, it is not easy for the "smaller" agencies to influence programme definition and performance, because these are often dominated by

International Financial Institutions (IFIs) or large donors. Also, it is difficult for each partner to assess its direct contribution and therefore the effectiveness of the assistance it provides.

Non-project financial assistance, particularly when it is large, is a powerful instrument to influence national policies. It can undermine the policy dialogue taking place within the sector, when it is provided outside of the existing sector-programme framework. This was the case, for example, with the MCC in Ghana, where MCC provided large amounts of financial resources for use outside the sector programme and without respect for the principles within the programme. A similar effect may be observed when new donors, such as China, provide funds to boost commercial relations which can replace funds that are provided by other traditional partners under policy conditionality (including criteria such as good governance, human rights, non-child labour, etc.).

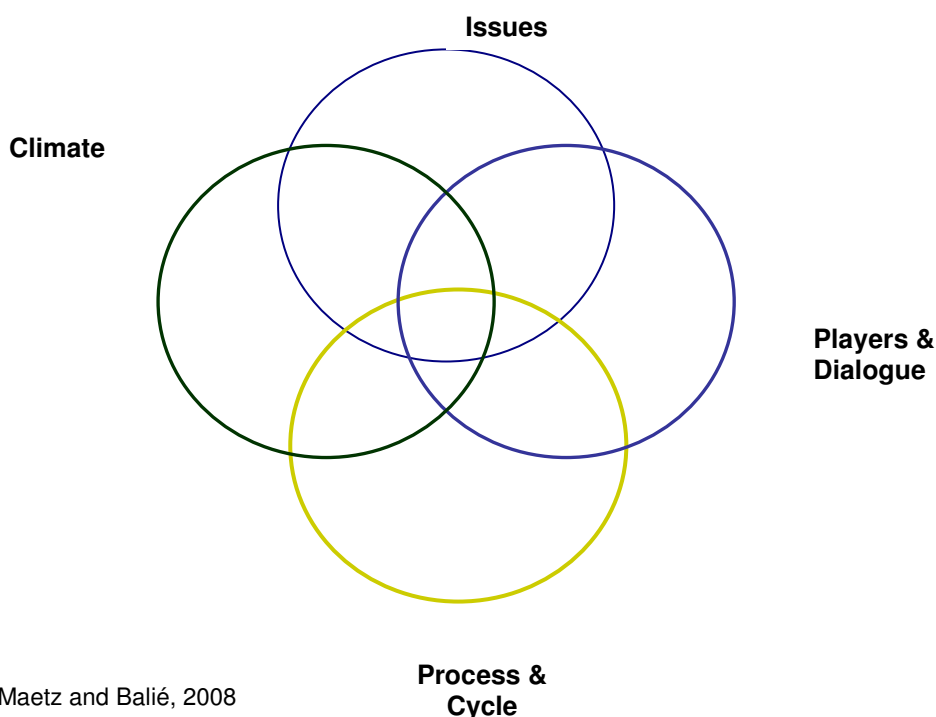
Conclusions about the international context

- *High priority must be given to participating in global policy processes.*
- *National-level policy assistance gains legitimacy and credibility when linked to global and regional agreements, conventions and issues.*
- *MDGs can serve as benchmarks for national objectives, facilitate monitoring and accountability, lend legitimacy to policy changes and provide access to resources for implementation of policies since consistency between MDGs and development programmes is sought by donors.*
- *New aid modalities (e.g. budget support, PRSPs and sector programmes) change the nature of policy dialogue and policy assistance can be incorporated in their implementation.*

5.1.2 The national context: a complex arena

The particular cultural, political, and economic environment often referred to as the national context in which decision-making takes place can define issues and determine the range of policy choices. Purposeful analysis of the national context is determined by the understanding of four critical dimensions as shown in Diagram 1. The national context that affects the policy assistance process is influenced by the policy climate and context, political will, development partners and national capacity.

Diagram 1: The National Context



The policy climate and context

A policy climate in favour of policy reform is an important asset for any policy assistance activity. It will contribute to stakeholders' increased receptivity and will help to create "policy windows" (See Box 8). Before policy-making can begin, an issue must come to the attention of policy-makers and a decision must be taken to act on the issue. Moments of change in the cultural, political, or economic environment are important in providing "windows of opportunity" to influence the policy agenda and policy choices. (Kingdon, 1984)

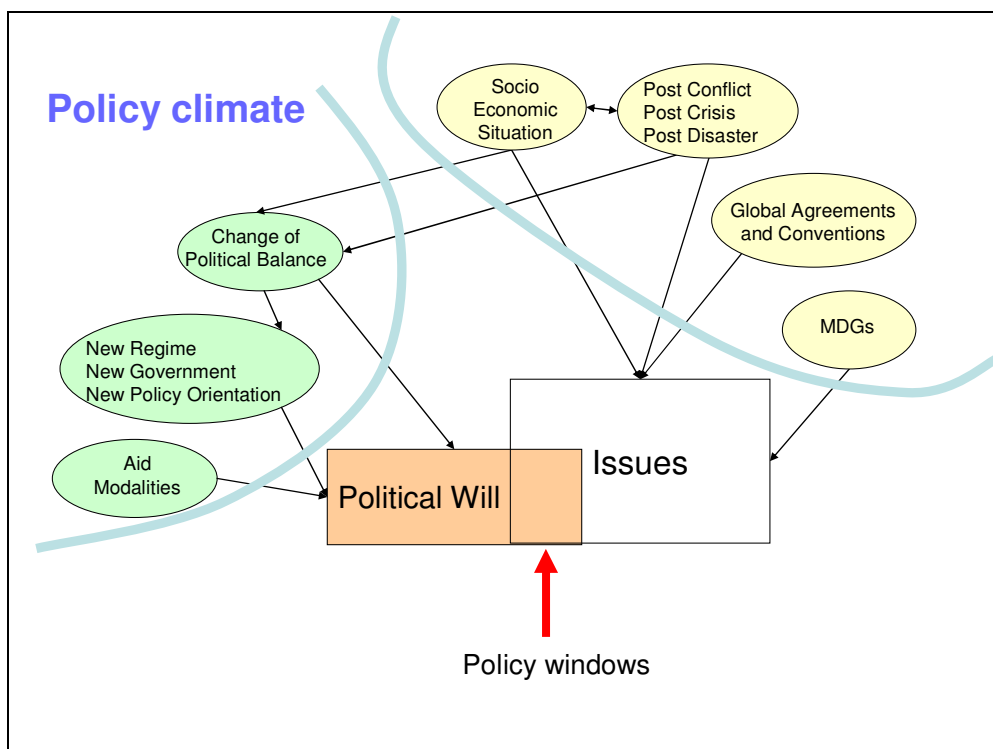
Box 8: Policy windows

Kingdon refers to opportunities for policy change as "policy windows". Policy windows occur because of changes in the political stream. Once the window opens, however, it does not stay open very long. "The window closes for a variety of reasons. First, participants may feel they have addressed the problem through decision or enactment...Second, and closely related, the participants may fail to get action...Third, the event that prompted the window to open may pass from the scene...Fourth, if a change in personnel opens a window, the personnel may change again."

(Kingdon, 1984)

Circumstances that can create conditions for the occurrence of a policy window are represented schematically in Diagram 2.

Diagram 2: Main factors determining the policy climate and the occurrence of policy windows



Changes in the policy climate may be caused by:

- **Greater freedoms**

A greater degree of democracy, or at least of freedom in expression, participation and transparency, can allow stakeholders to express their needs more freely and to feel confident that they can take part more productively in a policy dialogue.

- Existing democracy in the country and a level of transparency in national processes are eligibility criteria for budget support from the EC. As pointed out by Alfredson in the Serbia case-study, in 2001, the newly-elected government in Serbia under President Kostunica announced sweeping changes and that Serbia's primary strategic objectives would be accession to the EU and transition to a market economy. A new national agenda of institutional reform and modernization reflected the mood of a population that was eager to break with the past, overcome crippling poverty and resurrect its standing with the world.

- **A new orientation in the policy framework**

A change in overall policy framework can take the form of a fundamental change in policy references, as was the case in Russia after the fall of the USSR, or in China with its clear preference today for a market-driven economy while other aspects of the society are kept unchanged. It can also represent a shift in policy, as has been the case in Brazil or Argentina since 2002 with more emphasis on macroeconomic stability and cross-cutting policy (e.g. fiscal, education and labour).

- Amouri shows that in Morocco the government adopted a new policy orientation to accelerate the process of opening its agriculture sector to world markets. This required an enhanced capacity to analyse issues and prepare strategic decisions consistent with changes in the national and international context. For this, the government wanted to engage in an intellectual partnership with FAO.

- **Specific interest for a particular issue**

It quite often happens that an issue gains interest in the political agenda under different circumstances, such as when elections come close or when an issue is being actively debated at the international level. The controversy on immigration and the felt need to revise the policy in many European countries followed the enlargement of the EU and the possible accession of new countries. Although this issue was new in Italy, which until very recently has been a country of emigration, immigration was at the cutting-edge in the 2008 general elections. In the meantime, more cultural, traditional and long-lasting controversial issues like abortion or the death penalty remain high on the political agenda irrespective of the evolution of the debate at the international level. Another example could be climate change, an issue that influences most policy debates on the environment and also fiscal, trade and sectoral policies such as agriculture, tourism and transport.

- In Sierra Leone, Jawara explains that the policy mood changed after the general elections in 2002, when President Ahmed Tejan Kabbah unveiled a bold commitment to food security and the right to food and pledged, during his inaugural address, that "no Sierra Leonean should go to bed hungry by 2007". This created a "policy window" that could be used to galvanize support for strategic policy development and instil new policy ideas. This was well-received by some within the policy community who were advocating for action in the agriculture sector. The positive reaction of the government created conditions for action and facilitated involvement of other key actors (e.g. the IFIs, donors and other UN agencies) in the process. The problems, solutions and political streams converged at an opportune time for the development of an agricultural transformation and food security strategy.

- **More trust and a stronger leadership**

It is much more difficult to provide effective policy assistance when the government does not see the opportunity or need for policy change. The presence of forward-thinking personalities who can act as champions for policy change and influence the policy climate can be a key factor in success, as was the case in Morocco and Serbia. However, policy assistance advice must be focused not on the interest of these champions or of the government staff, but on the needs of the entire country.

- In Argentina, according to Kerrigan, the government that was elected in May 2003, following the financial and economic crisis was able to develop strong leadership which eased the decision-making process, generated trust and improved the governability of the country. This included being able to revise the regulatory framework, which was the main focus of FAO's policy assistance activity.

- **The situation in post-conflict countries**

Post-conflict countries offer great opportunities for policy change. Teams are often new and comprised of young experts. However, post-conflict situations also have characteristics that may hamper the smooth implementation of policy assistance activities. Post-conflict countries require support in the short and long term because governance and institutional capacity tend to be at their weakest level. This can hamper decision-making and the delivery of political and technical support required for policy formulation and implementation. Also, the break-up and slow recovery of national consensus and the rotation of people in senior policy positions often make it difficult to establish a reliable, long-term rapport with counterparts needed to adopt and follow-up on policy advice.

- In Burundi, Dévé emphasizes that the decision-makers' agenda was dominated by national reconciliation, reconstruction and channelling humanitarian aid. Macroeconomic policies needed to be reconsidered in the context of high inflation and policy-makers were changing. Provisional governments did not have the authority to impose viable, durable, short-, medium- and long-term policies. In the absence of a stable and clear overall policy framework, sectoral ministries addressed issues on an *ad-hoc* basis.
- In Serbia, factors that hindered adopting some recommendations included the widespread flux and uncertainty caused by planned or ongoing reforms across all areas of government (e.g. constitutional and legal reforms). Under those conditions, it will take time before a change of policy translates into concrete facts or actions, as was the case with community land-titling in Angola.
- UNICEF sees an opportunity for important policy change in post-disaster and post-conflict interventions and uses its "build back better" approach in these situations. Examples include creating better infrastructure and public systems and introducing or modifying a legal framework. UNICEF's approaches for water and sanitation, beyond its initial response, are to use methods and technologies that are consistent with international standards, thus reinforcing the long-term sustainability of the intervention. UNICEF defines its long-term involvement as establishing, improving and expanding safe water systems, taking into consideration emerging needs and changing and increasing demand. To convert the post-conflict situation into a window of opportunity, UNICEF is highly dependent on national-level policy-makers' readiness to introduce policy change. Policy advocacy and dialogue at the national level during this phase are essential.

An agency must understand a country's current political and economic context to operate within it effectively. This requires a preliminary identification of stakeholders and other actors who are already involved in policy work in the area to understand their positions and find ways to bring them on board. The problems with the rapeseed policy assistance case in Poland (see Box 9) illustrate this view very eloquently.

Box 9: Understanding the positions of interested parties

In Poland, the request for policy assistance on rapeseed policy came from a party which was not neutral (i.e. a major crushing plant). Many policy-makers and independent analysts regarded the assistance as unjustified because there were other agricultural and food sectors that faced much more severe economic difficulties and required much more attention than the almost-completely privatized and relatively well-functioning rapeseed crushing sector.

When the project was launched, it can be assumed that the EBRD was concerned with improving the economic condition of some of its customers (e.g. the crushing plant). Through the project, opportunities were created to:

- review the rapeseed sector in Poland (similar analyses were conducted by EBRD in other Central European countries);
- contribute to further modernization of the food industry;
- discontinue some of the most distortionary agricultural and trade policies (e.g. export subsidies).

From the start, rapeseed producers did not share the view that the project report would be independent. During the project, they felt they were not adequately consulted and learned about the proposed recommendations at two seminars where, in their view, too little time was allowed for discussion. They felt that they were drawn into signing an agreement with the government – which was desperately seeking to achieve consensus among various groups to calm the quickly-spreading political unrest – without full knowledge of procedures and their implications.

Ministry officials felt they were not involved in project activities, but that the workshops presented opportunities to initiate a dialogue among the key interest groups (i.e. crushers and rapeseed producers), collect additional arguments which could be used during EU negotiations on direct payments and discuss various sectoral implications of Poland's EU accession with different interest groups.

Independent policy analysts felt completely ignored by authors of the FAO report during the sector analysis and formulation of policy recommendations.

At the time of the project, each group of stakeholders appeared to pursue its own agenda. Probably not enough attention was given to the opinions of rapeseed producers, policy-makers and national policy advisors in the analysis and formulation of recommendations. As a result, there was a huge gap between the recommendations and the final position of policy-makers.

(adapted from the Poland case-study by Michalek)

Conclusions about assessing the policy climate and context

Several activities seem desirable as part of the preparatory work to be conducted prior to starting a policy assistance process:

- *Conduct an assessment of the national policy climate, including the “mood” of key stakeholders, to assess the extent to which they would be open to new ideas or approaches. Check the consistency or compatibility of the envisaged reforms (whether requested by one stakeholder or whether advocated by the organization) with the overall policy framework.*
- *Include an assessment of the degree of transparency of the political and policy processes, if only to take precautionary measures in designing the policy assistance process and managing resources to support it.*
- *Clarify the accountability of national counterparts at the beginning of the assistance process to strengthen their ownership and share responsibility in the whole process. Passive recipients either tend to reject or ignore policy proposals.*
- *Identify dynamics and processes within the main stakeholder organizations, related projects or activities already in place and opportunities for leverage for the issue on which the assistance will focus.*
- *Conduct these assessments on a continuous basis at the national level. They should be conducted by the country office of the organization providing policy assistance or by a group of organizations at the country level. These ongoing assessments would be part of a policy-intelligence function to help identify windows of opportunity for offering policy assistance, generate the information required to design the organization’s policy assistance activities and contribute to an enhanced policy-preparedness for the organization(s) providing policy assistance.*

Political will: a prerequisite that is difficult to assess

The government or non-governmental group to which policy support is provided (e.g. farmer organization) must have political will for policy assistance to be effective. There are innumerable examples where policy assistance activities were not effective in changing policies when the key partner was not really interested or did not consider the area in which advice was provided to be a priority. It is useful to distinguish between the political will necessary to undertake a particular policy process and the will to implement the resulting recommendations. Box 10 provides a clear illustration of this point.

There are several ways in which political will is expressed:

- **Presence of a clear demand**
First and foremost, there must be a clear demand – a request – for policy assistance. This demand must be precise regarding its purpose, objective and scope.
- **Identification of a priority issue**
The issue(s) for which assistance is sought should be considered a priority by national policy-makers. Two examples highlight this point:
 - In Poland, the EBRD requested advice from FAO, but national policy-makers were not particularly interested in the issue (i.e. other issues were priorities). As a result, the recommendations were never implemented.
 - In Libya, FAO was the only foreign partner cooperating with the government when it provided policy assistance on the seed sector. Under such conditions, one can question the real motive of the Ministry of Agriculture when it requested FAO support. Was it really to build a comprehensive seed project? Was it due to FAO’s reputation of capability and neutrality? Or was it to find a way out of the difficulties of an exceptional situation (i.e. embargo and conflict)?

Box 10: Implementing recommendations that are not priorities

The original request for this policy assistance project in Saint Lucia came from the Department of Fisheries in the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries and explicitly focused on revising the fisheries legislation, which first had been introduced in 1984 and needed to be updated.

There were a number of factors that converged to make such a review necessary and timely and which encouraged the Department of Fisheries to formulate its request to FAO:

- By 2001, Saint Lucia had almost two decades of experience in implementing the 1984 Fisheries Act and was therefore ready to consider amendments;
- In 1994, the Fisheries Regulations had been introduced to complement the Act and a number of new and specific problems were encountered in implementing and enforcing their provisions. These included the growth of criminal activity linked to the fisheries sector and the emergence and expansion of tourism-related uses of marine resources.

One of the recommendations made by the project (i.e. the introduction of a new High Seas Fishing Act), was not implemented because the recommendation did not respond to a local priority. The local agencies felt that this would represent an additional burden, “another thing that we will have to manage”, as expressed by a senior officer.

(adapted from Saint-Lucia case-study by Renard)

- **Allocation of appropriate resources**

Appropriate resources should be allocated to the policy work. Lack of resources is a clear indication of an insufficient level of priority for the work and a good indication that something is going wrong and that policy assistance is likely not to be effective. This needs to be monitored during the policy assistance process.

- For McCarthy, the lack of commitment by the government is considered to be the main cause of failure of an FAO policy assistance project in South Africa. The lack of commitment was evidenced by the fact that promised resources and support (e.g. staff, office space, logistical support, day-to-day responsibility for project implementation and comments on input provided by FAO consultants) never materialized. Policy-makers gave priority to other activities.

There are six factors that determine the existence and intensity of political will:

- **Presence of a real problem**

In Serbia, ministries, local and regional authorities and administrative units all appreciated the scope and severity of problems in the forestry sector. This widespread perception of the problem may have contributed to the acceptance of the idea of developing participatory mechanisms (which was one of the objectives of the FAO project).

- **Interest**

In Serbia, the forestry sector was underemphasized on the national agenda and resources were greatly needed to improve its conditions. Ministry officials recognized that a formal forestry strategy could give the sector a more prominent position in the national agenda. However, because the respective interests of the main stakeholders were not well analysed, understood and addressed, some of the policy recommendations did not obtain strong government support (e.g. the development of private forestry cooperatives and associations and cutting customs duties for imported wood-processing machinery and equipment to encourage domestic production) and have only been partly implemented, if at all.

- **Policy climate and context**

In October 2004, Serbia passed the “Government Strategy of Public Administration Reform in the Republic of Serbia” which required reforming public enterprises based on principles of decentralization, depoliticization, professionalism, rationalization and modernization. This gave further impetus to create a comprehensive forestry strategy to address the status of public enterprises in the forestry sector.

- **Presence and allocation of additional resources**

In Mozambique, when FAO started its programme on food security policy, in the framework of the FNPP, the coordinator, the FAO headquarters focal point and the FAO representative in Mozambique took the informed risk of starting a process that most probably would not be concluded by the end of the programme, hoping that the local context would be favourable for a longer period of time. At the time of designing the programme, the FAO representative was reasonably optimistic about receiving additional funds beyond the expected lifetime of the programme, whether related to emergencies or from a follow-up of the FNPP. Moreover, the partnership established with UNDP was meant to guarantee some sustainability of the programme. It turned out that none of the expected options materialized and both the sustainability and the continuity of the programme now seem compromised.

- **Convergence of stakeholders' views**

In Morocco, Amouri shows that one of the project recommendations was to create an observatory for Moroccan agriculture within the unit supported by the project (i.e. the CGDA). However, this recommendation was not implemented, probably largely because there is no clear agreement in the Ministry as to whether this system is best located in CGDA or in another directorate which has responsibility for information and statistics.

- **Link with national priorities**

Linking policy assistance with priority national undertakings helps to strengthen national commitment and political will and opens opportunities for advocating additional policy changes.

FAO's policy assistance was linked to the formulation of the 10th Five Year Plan in Bhutan, to the National Agricultural Biodiversity Programme in Lao PDR and to the PRSP in Zanzibar. This has been instrumental in getting high-level political attention and support. Moreover, by effectively helping in priority areas, trust is created which may generate conditions favourable to advocating for more change needed in other policy areas. (FNPP, 2007)

Political will and support can be reinforced by ensuring that national policy-makers have an appropriate level of ownership of the policy assistance activity. This can be achieved by involving them directly in the team, particularly when the focus is on a complex and highly-technically specialized area (FNPP, 2007), and having them contribute personally to the design of the policy support.

In cases where the context is not favourable to policy change and there is resistance, political will needs to be generated. The country's policy-intelligence function can help design a strategy to overcome the resistance. The way the policy assistance process unfolds and the modalities used to provide policy assistance will be critical in creating political will and nurturing it.

Conclusions about political will

- *Ensuring that one or more stakeholders has the political will to undertake a particular policy process is a prerequisite to providing policy assistance. In the absence of political will to tackle an issue which the organization deems critical, the organization must first find ways to generate interest based on its knowledge and understanding of the national context and on identifying potential winners and losers of the recommended policy changes.*
- *Alliances with national stakeholders or other development partners in favour of the policy assistance, particularly with those who have resources, can be effective in changing the attitude of political authorities.*
- *Political will must be nurtured and reinforced during the policy process so there is the will to implement the resulting recommendations. Political will should be monitored throughout the process to identify any reluctance and deal with it immediately.*

Development partners: a special subset of policy stakeholders

Policy advice that has the support of a broad alliance of coordinated development partners has a better chance of being effective and having its recommendations implemented. (FAO, 2001) This is easier to achieve in a situation where relations among development partners are good and somewhat coordinated (e.g. within sector programmes, a donor platform and national processes). In recent years there has been a trend towards better coordination and harmonization of development partners (e.g. the Rome and Paris Declarations).

While there is a strong desire to coordinate better among development partners, there are a number of factors that present challenges to doing so. Development partners are often constrained by their own constituencies. Also, the donor community is now comprised of an increasingly heterogeneous set of organizations with different degrees of capacity and commitment. Sometimes, broad alliances of large donors, each with their specific global agenda, may not be the best vehicle for achieving policy assistance effectiveness because the agenda upon which they all can agree may be too vague. Also, the mechanisms needed to coordinate among the partners may become too complex and generate excessive transaction costs.

Cases where development partners duplicate efforts are still frequent:

- In Sierra Leone, the EU and the DFID have recently pledged to assist the Ministry of Fisheries and Marine Resources in implementing yet another sector review before committing financial support for fisheries programmes. Reviewing the entire sector for legislative amendments for inland fisheries would be a duplication of effort and a waste of resources because similar work was already conducted under the 2003 Agriculture Sector Review. Also, during the PRSP process, DFID and others allegedly sponsored surveys that had already been conducted for the Agriculture Sector Review documents. Such actions can probably be attributed to the remnants of an ingrained culture of aid conditionality and tied aid. The PRSPs have been designed precisely to minimize these practices.
- In Burundi, a 2001 FAO assistance project on microfinance was being conducted simultaneously with work by the World Bank and the African Development Bank (AfDB) in the same area. FAO, AfDB and World Bank projects did not interact enough, worked on separate tracks and produced reports that reached the Council of Ministers simultaneously. The Council of Ministers logically claimed that the studies should have been coordinated.

In many cases, it is easier to coordinate with key partners working on similar policy assistance issues. UNICEF coordinates with other partners both at headquarters and at the national level through country representatives. Interesting synergies can develop around each partner's comparative advantages. For example, in World Bank-UNICEF coordination experiences, the World Bank offers access to high-level decision-makers, funding and technical expertise and UNICEF offers knowledge of the field, in-country experience, and country-level presence.

In the case studies reviewed for this study, there are several cases of such synergies:

- In Sierra Leone, AfDB decided that once the fishery policy supported by FAO assistance had been finalized, it would fund a capacity-building pilot project to support artisanal fisheries. This provided an incentive to the government to finalize the policy.
- In Serbia, two projects, funded by Norway and Finland, provided support to implement recommendations from FAO's policy assistance project in the forest sector.
- In Angola, USAID support on land assessment and legal advice was synergistic with FAO's decentralized land-management project.

In recent years, governments are finding funding outside of the "traditional" donor community. The emergence of new financial partners (e.g. donor countries like China, or large private foundations such as the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation) are changing the scene and incentives, as well as the "rules of the game" in policy dialogue, creating wedges in a government-partner system which was getting tighter and increasingly organized.

Working in coordination with a large donor can increase the chances of policy advice having an impact. However, the opposite may also occur. If effectively implementing the advice is tied to conditions that the government resists, the recommendations may not be adopted. Also, advice that

seems to support the agenda or interest of a large donor will not be credible and may affect the organization's reputation in that country:

- In Poland, FAO obtained strong support from EBRD (which was a not a neutral party) and one crushing company which was an EBRD-borrower. As a result, other stakeholders felt that this adversely affected the objectivity of the analysis. In this case, it appears that FAO may have been used by some specific interest groups as an instrument to promote their own arguments to policy-makers.
- In the case of South Africa, McCarthy believes that “lack of enthusiasm and hence cooperation on the part of the South African government, compared to the situation found in other African countries, can be ascribed to the fact that South Africa is not a borrowing country. An element of this recently surfaced in a totally different context and field. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) expressed some negative views on the inflation-targeting policy of the South African Reserve Bank, which promptly elicited a critical response from the Governor of the Bank to the effect that the IMF should not raise such criticism in public since South Africa is not in debt to either the IMF or the World Bank. In South Africa, the intention to borrow is not a carrot that encourages cooperation with international development agencies and consultants”.

When they work independently, FAO or IFPRI's reputation as an independent organization (i.e. not being in charge of large development-assistance programmes) gives them an entry point to policy decision-making that other international partners probably do not have.

Within the UN system, a UN Country Team offers great opportunities for coordination and synergies among UN organizations and can help eliminate some overlaps or contradictions. The One-UN Initiative and Joint Programming are further steps towards better integration and effectiveness of the UN system.

Conclusions about development partners

- *Coordination and cooperation among development partners contributes to the effectiveness of policy assistance, particularly in those cases where political will is weak or non-existent. It can also contribute to effectively piloting and implementing policy change.*
- *Care must be taken to create and nurture national ownership of policy recommendations that are supported by the donor community to avoid the impression that they are aligned with the agenda or interests of particular development partners.*

National capacity: a critical element of the national context

National capacity is generally regarded as the critical factor affecting the effectiveness of policy assistance. National capacity needs to be considered when designing policy assistance activities and selecting the most effective modalities to use. National capacity should also affect the content of recommendations. Recommendations must be specific to the context in which they will be applied to improve their chances of being implemented.

- WHO experts interviewed for this study indicated that policy assistance is not a question of what is technically nice to do, but rather what is technically possible, socially and politically acceptable and suitable. In some situations with low capacity (e.g. post-conflict countries), there may be a need to critically assess whether external support should temporarily substitute for government offices (e.g. in Kosovo and Timor Leste). In these cases, there should be plans for capacity-building and a schedule for withdrawing the external support in the short or medium term.

Assessing national capacity is important to being able to implement policy assistance recommendations. There are a number of factors to consider in that assessment:

- **Leadership**

One important element of national capacity is leadership, both institutional and individual. It is essential to work closely with a strong and credible national partner (e.g. ministry or NGO) that has the strength and the technical and political credibility to guide the policy process so that the recommendations can pass all the necessary tests and steps before they are implemented. There are several examples among the case studies prepared for this study that illustrate how important this factor can be.

- In Angola, the political strength of the Ministry of Urban and Environment Affairs (MINUA) was not enough to break the resistance of sectoral ministries to merging their cadastres into one national cadastre managed by MINUA.
- In Libya, the Ministry of Agriculture, which was the counterpart for the FAO seed-policy project, was institutionally weak and faced serious resource constraints. After 2001, its responsibilities were progressively reduced and the ministry was downgraded to a simple production service in 2002. In fact, the real decision-makers for the agriculture sector were the Ministry of Finance and the State Bank, which deal with strategic and long-term issues. However, seed policy was not their priority and they were not involved in the FAO project.

- **Clarity in institutional responsibilities and the decision-making process**

Clarity in institutional responsibilities and the decision-making process helps to specify the accountability of national counterpart organizations and teams. It is indispensable to know with whom to interact in the policy process. In the absence of this clarity, individuals are not motivated to take initiative. This clarity is a prerequisite for conducting a policy process; if it is not established, the first step of the policy assistance should be to help define roles and responsibilities. Having a good knowledge of the positions and agenda of different institutional stakeholders also helps to anticipate possible conflicts.

Working with numerous public organizations which are poorly coordinated makes policy processes more complex to manage. In Kenya, several ministries and more than 25 parastatals were involved in the agriculture sector at the turn of the century. (FAO/Moi University, 1999).

Examples of this issue were noted in several case studies conducted for this study:

- In Angola, there was a lack of clarity of institutional responsibilities during the transition phase after peace was established in the country. This made it much more difficult to influence policy. Regulations to clarify the situation were still awaiting publication.
- In Serbia, the lack of an organizational structure for some important stakeholders made it difficult to contact them or to involve them in the policy process.
- In Argentina, there were several issues and conflicts that affected the policy process. The chair of the National Food Commission (CAN) rotates every two years between the Ministry of Agriculture and the Ministry of Industry and Commerce; these ministries have different views and interests regarding food quality and safety. Furthermore, the National Agriculture and Livestock Health Service (SENASA) had been discredited because of a crisis in certification. Misunderstanding this complex situation made it awkward for the project to operate.

- **Opportunity for a stakeholder forum**

It is essential to be able to hold a stakeholder forum where all stakeholders can meet, discuss their interests and develop a tentative agreement eventually leading to consensus. This is critical to conducting the policy process in a transparent way that can generate the commitment that is indispensable for eventual implementation of the recommendations.

- In Burundi, stakeholders feel that there is a need for a continuing, permanent collaboration between decentralized financial societies (e.g. Systèmes de Financement Décentralisé (SFD)) and other concerned stakeholders. This kind of neutral forum could include the Ministries of Finance and Agriculture, development partners, Community Development Councils (Comités de Développement Communautaires), the National Development Bank (BNDE) and the rural Microcredit Fund (FMCR).

- **Stability of the counterpart team**

National capacity also depends on the stability of the counterpart team. In the absence of a stable counterpart team (or set of interlocutors), it becomes much more difficult to ensure ownership of and follow-up on policy recommendations. Even capacity-building efforts will be wasted in the absence of team stability.

- In South Africa, government departments are still in the process of post-apartheid transformation to meet the needs of a democratic society and to reflect the demographic profile of the country. This transformation has led to high staff turnover, which means that interest in projects may get lost during turnover and also that some managers in government service, although suitably qualified and talented, lack administrative and managerial experience.

- **Capacity of civil society**

Well-developed capacity of civil society can be vital for bringing in fundamental reforms that government organizations oppose or are reluctant to implement. The evaluation of the French FSP projects shows that in cases where the state is weak, farmer organizations and the political system (i.e. the national assembly) can take the lead. (Ribier, Le Coq and Pesche, 2005)

- In Angola, some key NGOs (e.g. ADRA, Development Workshop) have organized their advocacy, lobbying, research and intermediation efforts into a new structure called Rede Terra, which is supported by USAID and other donors. The Rede Terra network translated the new land law project into local languages and accessible formats. This enabled creating an awareness-raising and sensitization campaign and gathering concerns, remarks and suggestions from concerned stakeholders. Reports were prepared and transmitted to the relevant Parliamentary Commission. After publication of the 2004 Land Law, Rede Terra conducted sensitization work on land rights with illiterate communities to disseminate knowledge about land administration in the province and to assist in land delimitation and titling.

- **Political governance**

Political governance is another dimension of national capacity that can help implement policies in the medium to long term. Where the political system allows opposition parties and their representatives to associate at policy fora and consultations, the likelihood of policy reversals when government changes is greatly reduced. This is illustrated by several FAO experiences, particularly in Latin America.

- **Availability of data and baselines**

If data and baselines are not available, additional effort and resources are required to provide evidence-based advice or advocacy.

- In Serbia, grossly inadequate sectoral data made it difficult to assess the actual level and characteristics of forest degradation.
- In Sierra Leone, quantitative data on the progress and impact of the government's effort to diversify crop production are patchy, at best. Also, there is no national data-collection programme to adequately inform advocacy messages in favour of creating a Right to Food Secretariat because the government's data-collection activities were suspended at the height of civil war. This resulted in a serious lack of data during the formulation of policy and planning processes in the post-conflict reconstruction. The destruction of earlier documentation during the civil war compounded the problem.

- **Individual capacity**

The level of individual capacity, technical expertise and skill available in the country influence the effectiveness of policy assistance and the selection of policy assistance modalities. In countries where capacity is limited, finding highly qualified policy-makers with time to act as counterparts remains a challenge, since there are few of them and they are often overstretched. In a situation where capacity is high, policy assistance may focus more on exchanging experiences with other countries, supporting specific studies that are inputs into the policy process or engaging in an intellectual partnership for knowledge exchange. National experts will be able to use the results of

the studies, adapt experiences from elsewhere and use knowledge about the country's conditions for their own purposes, including drawing policy implications. Two examples illustrate this point:

- In Poland, despite the low priority given to the rapeseed chain and the suspicion about the lack of objectivity of FAO's study, national policy-makers used the project to attain their own goals, which were to initiate a dialogue among the key interest groups (i.e. crushers and rapeseed producers), collect additional arguments which could be used during EU negotiations and discuss sectoral implications of Poland's EU accession with different interest groups.
- In Morocco, opening its agriculture sector to world markets requires enhanced capacity to analyse issues and prepare strategic decisions that consider changes in the national and international context. The government would like to cooperate with FAO, but given the high level of Moroccan expertise, this cooperation should be forged through an intellectual partnership where FAO and Moroccan experts would exchange views periodically on issues important for the Moroccan government. This would be mutually beneficial because this partnership would also be an opportunity for FAO to sharpen its methodologies and analytical tools based on interaction with Moroccan experts and increase the effectiveness of its assistance to other countries.

High capacity is generally considered to be a positive influence on policy assistance effectiveness. However, if policy advice proposes a radical change to which civil servants or elites with entrenched interests are opposed, higher national capacity also can mean greater capacity to resist change. This is because anti-reformers are usually the winners of prior contests over policy and, as a consequence, they have colonized institutions of power in the society and government. They use these institutions to ensure that policy favours their interests. (Grindle, 2000) When the capacity is extremely low, political personnel tend to be more open to change.

- In South Africa, FAO and government officials have noted that since the country has substantial academic and research capacity based at universities and research foundations, some officials believe that national capacity exists to do policy work and that international agencies should assume the role of unbiased facilitators rather than provide advice.
- In the Serbia case study it is noted that deficits in education, training and technology and a dearth of statistical data about Serbia's forestry sector contributed to the lack of capacity for creating a modern and nationally-relevant forestry strategy. At the same time, the existence of such broad challenges contributed to the Ministry's openness to consider FAO's recommendations and to the eagerness of stakeholders to become active supporters of reform.
- GTZ experts estimate that low government capacity was a factor in the success in Timor Leste. French experts interviewed for this study also note that, in some cases, a weak state can be a factor for success if farmer organizations and the political system (i.e. the national assembly) can take the lead.

In some of the cases analysed for this study, capacity was lacking at the implementation stage, which jeopardized the final outcome and impact of the policy process. The case of Bangladesh (see Box 11) illustrates this point well and almost all of the dimensions of national capacity are seen in this example. In Bangladesh, policy implementation in the food and agricultural sectors generally had been weak. Factors included a systemic lack of institutional capacity and the complexities of coordinating among the large number of sector and subsector agencies (including 15 agencies in the Ministry of Agriculture alone).

Box 11: Capacity for policy implementation in Bangladesh

The Seed Wing of the Ministry of Agriculture (i.e. the secretariat of the National Seed Board), which is responsible for overseeing the seed subsector, is poorly staffed with little authoritative decision-making capability. Both the Seed Certification Agency (SCA) and the Seed Wing of the Ministry of Agriculture had lacked continuity in leadership and technical capacity and could not exert adequate influence to prioritize departmental budgets to strengthen SCA. Frequent transfers of government personnel within civil service at all levels, including from SCA to other parts of the Department of Agricultural Extension, posed difficulties in continuity and retaining trained personnel.

SCA's critical role as a policy instrument across many development issues was poorly appreciated. These issues included productivity enhancement, biosecurity, marketing and trade, environmental protection and farmer empowerment. SCA had not been championed at a high enough level to secure resource commitments and initiate institutional changes necessary to make it effective. Past projects in this subsector had focused on seed multiplication issues rather than regulatory and certification functions.

To permit SCA to fill its role in seed testing, quality control and certification would require developing human resources and laboratory facilities, creating a separate service cadre and establishing SCA as a regulatory body independent of the Department of Agricultural Extension. The recent inclusion of "SCA Strengthening" as a possible pipeline project in the 2006/07 sectoral block demonstrates some progress towards implementation by the Ministry of Agriculture, but it took many different stimuli and processes since 1999 to get to this stage.

(adapted from the Bangladesh case-study by Lai)

Conclusions about national capacity

- *National capacity can be defined in terms of:*
 - *leadership and strength of the national partner;*
 - *clarity of the decision-making process and delineation of institutional responsibilities;*
 - *existence of a stakeholder forum where policy dialogue can occur;*
 - *the capacity of civil society and its organizations to engage in policy dialogue;*
 - *capacity to implement policy recommendations;*
 - *individual technical capacity, expertise and skills.*
- *Clarity in decision-making and institutional responsibilities should be established before embarking on a policy process.*
- *National capacity should be assessed before designing the policy assistance activity and should constitute a basis for formulating recommendations that can be implemented.*
- *While high capacity is generally considered a positive factor for the effectiveness of policy assistance, high capacity can also mean greater capacity to resist change when the advice proposes a radical change to which civil servants or elites are opposed.*

How the national context affects the choice of policy assistance modalities

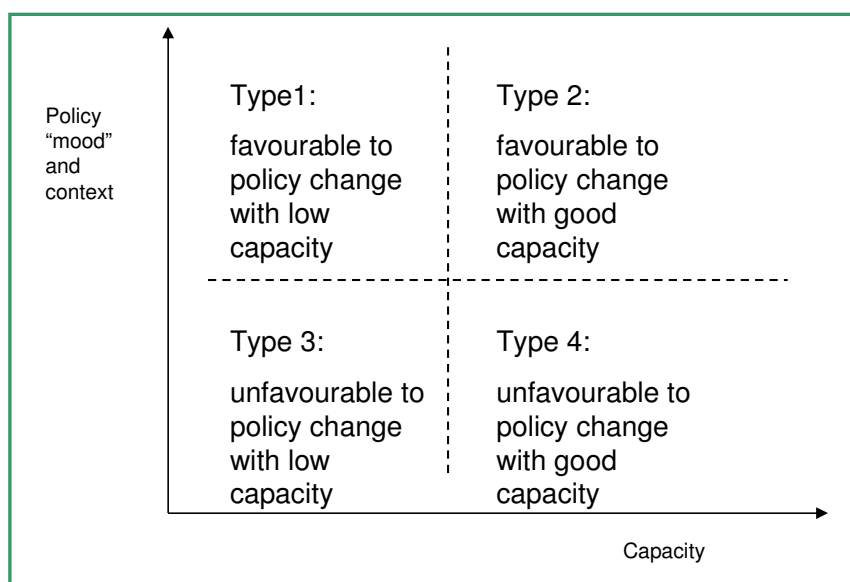
It is possible to identify four types of national contexts and the combinations of policy assistance modalities that are best suited to each (see Box 12).

Type 1: Favourable to policy change with low capacity

This type corresponds to the situation found in many post-conflict or post-emergency countries or to countries which have recently experienced a change of regime or government (e.g. Sierra Leone). Such situations require broad advice and capacity-building for government and civil society to enable them to engage constructively in a policy dialogue.

A preliminary analysis of the current economic situation (i.e. sector review) will help identify issues and establish basic data on the baseline situation. In some cases, it may be necessary to clarify institutional responsibilities before a proper policy process can be initiated. This can be followed by more in-depth policy assistance on some of the priority issues identified. This advice is best provided through policy projects and, in some cases, the advice can be given during discussions of sector programmes. Support in policy coordination also may be needed.

Box 12: Types of National Contexts



This type of context can also correspond to less-developed countries where capacity is limited but where there is a will to address a particular policy issue (e.g. compliance with a global agreement or convention or considering the extension of rural finance policy). In a situation where governance offers opportunities for stakeholders to raise policy issues, capacity-building would need to focus on these specific areas and include lessons from other experiences. Support could be provided through policy projects with pilots to test alternative options, if possible.

Type 2: Favourable to policy change with good capacity

This type corresponds to the situation found in many middle-level countries that are in a process of transformation (e.g. Morocco) or want to address a particular policy issue driven by domestic problems or groups (e.g. Poland) or by international agreements (e.g. Argentina). National expertise exists and it can be supported by disseminating international knowledge through networks and supporting national policy research centres or think tanks. Some specialized expertise also can be mobilized in those areas where there are local knowledge gaps. External support also may be useful to provide independent brokering services among different national interest groups and stakeholders. These countries are probable candidates for sector programmes, budget support and other forms of non-project financial assistance.

Type 3: Unfavourable to policy change with low capacity

This type corresponds to the situation found in some less-advanced countries with low capacity and where the governance system is opaque and does not offer much opportunity for participation. Policy assistance is greatly required but not necessarily in great demand. Despite its need, policy change is not desired by the political leadership; there is no political will. This is a difficult situation where the agency and the government are not in agreement. There may be a need for continued efforts to negotiate and persuade the government to change its views and to constructively develop and modify policies to make them more effective. (FAO, 2001)

To generate political will and a constituency in favour of change before more traditional policy assistance activities (e.g. policy reviews and policy projects) can be implemented, first may require conducting a good analysis of the national context, drivers of change, advocacy, leadership methods and capacity-building for both government and stakeholders. Linking stakeholders to international or regional networks and conducting small pilots can help convince some champions that change is possible and desirable.

Type 4: Unfavourable to policy change with good capacity

This type corresponds to the situation found in some middle-level countries with good capacity but where the governance system is opaque and does not offer much opportunity for participation. Policy assistance is greatly required but not necessarily in great demand and capacity to resist change is high in leading circles. In this case, an analysis of the policy context is particularly important to identify a potential constituency in favour of change. The best strategy in this case may be to link with global issues (e.g. MDGs, agreements and conventions) and use them as entry points for policy change. Policy pilots can be used to illustrate the benefits of policy changes. Alternatively, non-government stakeholders (e.g. farmer organizations) or some political leaders could be identified as champions for policy change in some areas. National expertise and members of national policy institutes can be sensitized and strengthened through participation in networks. When the situation is ripe, some specialized expertise also can be made available in those areas where there are local gaps. Sector programmes, budget support and other forms of non-project financial assistance can be used to convince policy-makers and support change.

Conclusions and lessons about the national context

- *Conduct two kinds of assessments before undertaking policy assistance activities:*
 - *A “Policy Climate Assessment”, to assess the extent to which stakeholders are open to new ideas or approaches and to check the consistency or compatibility of the envisaged reforms with the prevailing overall policy framework.*
 - *A “National Capacity Assessment”, to assess clarity and transparency of the decision-making process and the delineation of institutional responsibilities, identify appropriate partners, check the existence of an adequate policy forum, inventory local expertise and gauge risks and capacity of resistance to change.*

These assessments should be performed as a permanent policy-intelligence function rather than on an ad-hoc basis.

- *Help clarify the policy process and institutional responsibilities before embarking on a policy assistance process.*
- *Determine if one or more stakeholders have the political will to undertake the planned policy process and identify a policy champion(s).*
- *If insufficient political will exists, conduct a careful analysis of the national context to identify possible drivers of change. Continuous persuasion and negotiation with the government, advocacy, pilots and alliances with other development partners and national stakeholders will be needed to generate the interest and political will required.*
- *Monitor and reinforce political will during the policy process.*
- *Adapt policy assistance modalities to the national context, particularly to the policy climate and national capacity.*

5.2 Policy Assistance Process

A policy assistance process requires careful assessment of the kinds and duration of assistance modalities to be used. It is of paramount importance that the policy assistance process follow a strategic design and include consideration for human factors, communication, negotiation, participation, ownership, timing and capacity-building. It cannot be limited to providing technical or analytical inputs to the national process, however essential those inputs may be, but must be

designed to influence the way this process unfolds. This view is shared by the overwhelming majority of experts consulted for this study.

To be effective, this strategic approach to the policy assistance process requires credibility, overarching concepts, models and pilots. All the institutions surveyed also indicated that it is critical to provide good references of past successful actions as evidence of legitimacy. These references are often referred to as “models” or “benchmarks” and are built on several key principles detailed in this section.

5.2.1 Establishing trust and a stable relationship

There is general agreement among those consulted in this study that policy assistance processes have a better chance for a good start in countries where mutual trust has been built through repeated interactions. For that reason, it seems important that the agency providing assistance should engage in a continuous policy dialogue with the government and other stakeholders. Actors such as the World Bank could refrain from taking action depending on its level of trust. “The lack of mutual trust or dialogue with a country may lead to the decision not to lend.”

Countries also prefer to seek assistance from well-known and trusted partners and turn away from others, even when the latter can provide evidence of appropriate expertise. Several examples demonstrate that trust and reputation take a long time to develop and are difficult to obtain, very easy to lose and almost impossible to recover.

While building strong relationships with partners is critical, it is nevertheless important to be aware of the risk of too much closeness with the government or a specific development partner (particularly if this partner is funding the agency’s services, in full or in part) because it may affect the agency’s image of independence. The case of Poland, which has been already mentioned, illustrates an example of when things went wrong in this regard.

A large number of the people contacted for this study insisted that establishing a true dialogue and demonstrating listening skills and an interest in people are necessary elements that help establish stable and trustful working relationships with counterparts. The main question is: How can we make people trust us? The answer suggested by the majority is that the process should start by considering the human factor. If a relationship is not solid, the policy assistance activity will likely fail. This may be because it will be impossible for the agency to convince key government decision-makers that there is an opportunity for policy change or that there are benefits to following policy recommendations.

- World Bank experts stated that a good relationship with the “client” is essential and can be demonstrated through the existence of a government team willing to work and/or share values with the Bank.
- In the Moroccan case study, preliminary discussions and useful dialogue with all stakeholders early in the process allowed them to be included in the formulation of final policy recommendations.
- In Sierra Leone, FAO was present in relief and coordination activities during the war; its post-war development efforts were almost unanimously recognized. This certainly helped FAO play a significant role in placing agriculture at the centre of the government’s transformation process.
- In Serbia, the lack of any prior dialogue in the forestry sector made it necessary to invest time and energy in explanations and confidence-building that were essential prerequisites for an effective policy process and dialogue in this area.
- In Libya, the absence of an early dialogue impeded the policy assistance process. FAO could not establish the conditions for dialogue with the key decision-makers (i.e. the Ministry of Finance and the State Bank) and other important stakeholders, such as UN agencies active in the country.

Several development partners interviewed for this study indicated that a continuous institutional presence – through a country office or a long-term advisor – is a good practice. Several interviewees argued that advisors “embedded” in the national context may develop greater capacity to assess the local situation through full interactions with stakeholders and policy-makers. They may develop a deeper understanding of key factors and better capture the “drivers of change” (see Box 18). Therefore, these advisors may be the first ones to identify windows of opportunity and could initiate

the policy dialogue right away. For example, Oxfam usually tries to develop projects where it can work with local staff embedded in the national or local context.

Advisors are better able to integrate the policy assistance process in the national context when there has been a longstanding good relationship in the country. For this reason, several case studies indicated that isolated, short interventions by consultants should be avoided.

- The Argentina case study illustrates that the duration of the contract matters. The experts were in the field for only a short time and they could not influence the policy process. One major reason was that the Technical Cooperation Programme (TCP) only allowed short contracts and recruitment of national experts, which were not the most effective ways to obtain the expertise needed for the specific topic for which the assistance was provided.
- In Libya, the project did not have an FAO office with an in-country representative. This made it difficult for FAO to fully understand the national context which was characterized by political difficulties (i.e. embargo), budget restrictions (i.e. low oil prices) and scarcity of experienced technicians and policy analysts.

GTZ indicated that capacity-building contributes to developing trust and is a reason why governments give preference to agencies who give more importance to capacity-building in their interventions. This is another reason why short interventions are not desirable; short interventions by contracted consultants usually do not leave sufficient time for capacity-building. (FNPP, 2006)

The stability of the expert team contributes to creating a favourable, long-term relationship (Stone *et al*, 2001). The stability of the counterpart team is also important; it should be staffed with persons who have the skills to communicate well with partners and who get along well to ensure smooth internal communication.

Having a continuous institutional presence with experienced staff living and working in the country helps to establish trust and build mutual confidence and understanding. This presence ensures continuity of dialogue, flow of information and accumulation of knowledge and experience.

5.2.2 Communication is key

“Good research alone is insufficient. To have impact, it must be communicated to the right people.” (K. Grebmer, S. Babu, V. Roeh and M. Rubinstein, 2005). This is true also for policy advice. To enhance effectiveness, policy assistance activities should have a clear communication strategy. If appropriate information is readily available at the time when policy-makers need it, it can help frame the debate and affect policy-makers' choices. Moreover, recommendations that are communicated well will be more effectively adopted.

Communication must be continuous throughout the policy process. It is essential to communicate about the policy assistance process, including its different phases and intermediate results, to avoid any surprises or a dwindling of interest, political will and support.

- In Lao PDR, where FAO is providing assistance to the government to mainstream agricultural biodiversity concerns into agriculture policies, senior policy-makers have expressed concern about not being sufficiently informed about progress in the policy assistance programme and have shown some signs of dwindling interest.
- DFID and ODI stressed that proper communication is required from the very beginning of the process and needs to be sustained throughout. There are several ways to publicize an activity, including meetings, seminars or workshops, press releases, short reports and policy briefs.

Several sources interviewed in this study felt that poor or inadequate communication may lead to failure of the policy assistance process. One factor that can make communication difficult is a language barrier. In Arab or Portuguese speaking countries, for example, the language barrier has to be addressed because it may be difficult to mobilize the required capacities in the appropriate language. English and French may be “universal” languages among top-level policy-makers, but mid- and low-level public servants in charge of implementation may speak other languages. Translation costs are also an issue.

- In Libya, there is no real tradition of communication and the administration pays little attention to the flow of communication. During the policy project, important information was not distributed to key actors, the project issues were not widely-disseminated and project reports and recommendations were not read. In this case, the project's communication approach conflicted with the local, strong oral tradition and suffered also from the language issue.
- In Serbia, there had been poor intra- and inter-sector communication at the time of the assistance request and during the early phases of the project. The policy process and dialogue was hindered by lack of information and poor and misleading information by stakeholders. This created additional sources of conflict and tension.

Communication management should be addressed to strategically-identified targets. ODI believes it is critically important to target opinion leaders because they may have the potential to support or adversely affect the message. Likewise, research carried out by ODI and Oxfam suggests using "shadow networks" to get out the message. Identifying these networks should be done as part of the situation analysis. An example of such "shadow networks", which may be difficult to include in the policy process, are secret societies in Liberia that play an important role in any major decision and therefore cannot be neglected.

Experiences suggest that communication strategies (e.g. the packaging of information, the channel and level of communication) must be adapted to the culture and educational level of the targeted audience. Long reports with long lists of recommendations generally should be avoided.

ODI, DFID, IFPRI and OPM consider that good packaging of recommendations at the end of the policy assistance project is important. Packaging has two key aspects: format and style. Format refers to the form or layout of the research product (i.e. is the product a hefty report, a policy brief, or a video?). Style is the way in which the material is presented. Clarity of exposition, use of technical jargon and comprehension level are all aspects of style. Format and style must be geared towards satisfying the intended, and clearly identified, audience. The packaging will determine how "user-friendly" the product is perceived to be and hence the likelihood that it will attract the audience's attention.

Timeliness of communication cannot be neglected either, as illustrated by the case of Sierra Leone. In this case, the very late delivery of the agriculture sector review report certainly was a constraint to the implementation of some of its recommendations. This aspect was also stressed by IFPRI.

5.2.3 Investing in policy intelligence, diagnosis and follow-up

There is consensus that resources have to be mobilized at all stages of the policy assistance process. Two essential phases in which financial and human resources are needed, but which are generally neglected, are diagnosis and follow-up.

Diagnosis

As mentioned in the description of the national context, prior to designing a policy assistance activity it is important to conduct an analysis of the national context, including an analysis of the capacity of counterpart institutions and of available national expertise. For several agencies surveyed for this study, finding highly-qualified national policy-makers or experienced technical advisors with time to interact as counterparts at the national level remains a challenge in many countries.

As already mentioned, having a policy-intelligence mechanism at the country level helps in performing an in-depth situation analysis. Investing resources in conducting a comprehensive situation analysis is the preferred approach for most agencies surveyed. For ODI, for example, the challenge in the diagnosis phase consists of investing resources to understand the "drivers of change" (see Box 18). Policy assistance projects sometimes do not pay enough attention to addressing this as part of the policy assistance process.

- In Bangladesh, the Ministry of Agriculture's planning units had limited capacity in policy design and implementation, including monitoring and evaluation of the policy cycle. This was a limiting factor that received scant attention by the policy project and other earlier FAO policy assistance activities.

- The case of Sierra Leone showed that at the time the request for assistance was made, nothing could ensure that relevant government line ministries had the human resources capacity for proper post-project coordination.

Follow-up

Almost all of the people interviewed for this exercise stated that following up after the recommendations are made in a policy assistance project is as critical as supporting the implementation of policy change. In several case studies, this phase is considered weak because the policy assistance process actually ended with the recommendations. Most case studies suggest that it should be the role of FAO's representation in the country to ensure that policy intelligence is conducted prior to the intervention and that follow-up and implementation of the recommendations are addressed after it. As stated by UNESCO, continuity and persistence of policy assistance and presence matter.

- In Burundi, assistance aimed to establish a rural credit mechanism, however, FAO's lack of adequate follow-up meant that some of the crucial recommendations received no attention. For example, the recommendation that a committee on rural credit be created with a specific mandate and functions was never adopted. Recommendations for which follow-up was secured (e.g. the promulgation of the decree on microfinance) were implemented. The decree was promulgated largely because of the pressure created by the opportunity to get approval of a USD 5million Netherlands-supported project to reinforce and support microfinance in the country.

Implementation of policy recommendations requires funding which, ideally, should be predictable. This funding could come either from the government budget or from development partners or from a mix of both. This is another reason to have stakeholders involved in the policy process – so that they are ready to invest in implementing its outcomes.

5.2.4 Facilitating participatory interactions

Encouraging participation

A broadly-shared view is that process facilitation is of primary importance and, in some cases, even more important than technical inputs (although the quality of technical inputs is essential). Indeed, technical inputs can be brought in at a strategic point in time, whereas facilitation has to be mobilized from the beginning and throughout the process. This is well-demonstrated in the Angola case study, where FAO was recognized for its capacity to convene all stakeholders for dialogue which contributed towards facilitating the policy-making process.

There is also a general consensus that the first task in the policy assistance process is to stimulate the participation of members of the policy community through facilitation, in cases where this participation is found to be lacking. Policy assistance literature defines policy communities as stable networks of policy actors, both from inside and outside the government, which are highly integrated with the policy-making process and are the most institutionalized kind of policy networks. (Stone *et al.*, 2001)

There is consensus about the value of seeking wide participation by including all stakeholders that have vested interests in the issues being addressed. Many consider it critical to build a diagnosis with the participation of counterparts. However, participation has associated costs and demands and requires specific facilitation skills, and the proliferation of participatory processes may make it increasingly difficult to mobilize stakeholders. It is therefore important to be selective. Participation can be achieved in several ways:

- In Burundi, the text of the proposed policy was distributed to all participants in the National Roundtable which had been created to discuss the transitory rural credit policy and its organization. The text was the result of a policy assistance process which involved local stakeholders in three regional seminars and which sent several national consultants to African countries for study tours.
- In Serbia, an FAO consultant created a draft strategy document that provided participants in the drafting process with a framework for debate and discussion. Then a (pre-final) draft National

Forestry Strategy was formulated with sector-wide participation and was later adopted by the Serbian Government.

Participation must be well-organized and take place in the appropriate institutional context or venue. Task forces have proven to be an effective way to mobilize national talents and organize participation in policy formulation, provided their membership is carefully selected (i.e. includes key stakeholders and those with competence) and their governance is adequate (i.e. includes working and decision-making procedures). Task forces can enable the emergence of spokespersons for civil society. (Norton, 2004) They also can be linked to existing relevant coordinating mechanisms (e.g. councils or committees).

- Oxfam and WHO believe that since policy- and decision-makers are central actors, it is good to engage them early in the process because this can facilitate good articulation of the policy assistance programme in the long run. The case of Serbia provides an illustration: the decision was taken early to involve key people from the concerned ministry to secure successful implementation of the recommendations.

The facilitator's role

The first priority of the person who plays the role of the facilitator should be to have stakeholders agree on the purpose and process of the policy assistance project. This is generally achieved through effective communication and facilitated participation.

- In the South Africa case study, the different expectations that FAO and the Government had for the project was a reason for its failure.
- In Serbia, the majority of stakeholders interviewed cited the development of a forestry sector based on stakeholder participation as a major innovation and as the most important contribution of the FAO project.

The facilitator's neutral and catalytic role is often emphasized. Building on the experience of Angola, Devé describes the role of FAO in the policy process as eminently that of a facilitator and catalyst. The facilitator can ease the process and create an environment and sequence of activities that will favour quality interactions. This role sometimes may be combined with providing technical content to contribute to the policy debate. The characteristics of the facilitator are further described later in this publication. Adopting a facilitator's role may be more appropriate in cases where the environment is already favourable for change, as in the case of Types 1 and 2 outlined earlier in this section.

However, there is a limit for an agency like FAO to remain neutral when the situation is less favourable to change (e.g. Types 3 or 4 detailed earlier in this section). UN agencies like FAO promote policy principles globally (e.g. food security, human rights, the right to food, poverty reduction, sustainable development and good agricultural practices) through advocacy and policy and technical advice at the national level. They will be inclined to support actors at the national level who best serve these principles, or to engage in alliances with some stakeholders identified through their policy-intelligence work. As a result, they will be perceived as lacking neutrality and providing "external interference". This may lead to tension which sometimes may be a cost of effective policy advice.

Being neutral and playing a coordinating role does not mean being passive or reactive. On the contrary, in the opinion of several of those interviewed for this study, it is important to take initiative. In the project on microfinance in Burundi, for example, the path chosen by FAO (i.e. promoting a rather bottom-up process and waiting for national initiative) was totally different from the more vigorous attitude adopted by UNDP, which consisted of activating the government to obtain an early decision on the same issue.

There is a consensus that the best approach for the agency delivering the policy assistance is to become involved progressively in facilitating the process and establishing a dialogue. This progressive involvement allows recognition, buy-in and legitimacy. The progressive involvement also allows for one of the key roles of the facilitator, which is to design the process with a sequence of events to keep stakeholders involved and committed.

The role of coordination also includes coordinating external partners. In several case studies, FAO was perceived as coordinating development partners and even, in some cases, national partners (e.g. ministries).

- According to Zouaoui, in Libya, if FAO had paid more attention to other agencies' programmes in the country, it could have facilitated the implementation and funding of policy assistance initiatives by building consensus. The fact that recommendations were not adopted can be explained by the lack of synchronization between coordinating organizations (e.g. Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Planning and State Bank) and the Ministry of Agriculture.

5.2.5 Targeting key stakeholders

Policy-makers are naturally one of the target audiences for policy assistance, but an effective strategy should identify the right policy-makers to involve and to whom critical information should be delivered. Stakeholders could be beneficiaries, advocacy groups, policy advisors, policy analysts, political parties, members of Parliament or the media. Two, usually overlapping, sets of actors need to be identified during the diagnosis phase: those with a substantive interest in the issue and those with influence and official standing in the decision arena.

Decisions are not made by a single person. Policies and programmes are the cumulative result of conflict and cooperation among many government actors, principally politicians and bureaucrats, as well as members of national or foreign interest groups and external partners. Of course, interaction among these actors may result in either policy stasis or change. (Garrett and Islam, 1998) The question that arises here is how to bring the "right" people and institutions on board. More generally, what really matters is to get people on board because they have vested interests. These players must be identified in the diagnosis phase and mobilized through effective communication and adequate facilitation.

Interest groups can exert significant influence on policy choices; the impact that a group has depends on how powerful the group is. Powerful interest groups need not be rich or large. A decision-maker's interest in advancing a group's cause may be sufficient to give the group access to the policy process. The decision by policy-makers to take up, champion, or oppose an issue depends to a large extent on whether they believe furthering a particular group's concerns will advance their own interests.

Targeting key stakeholders is essential, but not necessarily easy to achieve. Stakeholders are institutions that sometimes can ease the process or, if they are not adequately understood, approached and involved, have the potential to put the process at risk. Process failure in economic policy implementation is often associated with inadequate appreciation of the importance of institutions and the role that they play.

- In Bangladesh, the content and format of the policy assistance project did not clearly identify or facilitate accurate targeting of key players.
- In Libya, the right ministries were not involved and neither in Liberia, secret societies.

The most important reasons for selecting an institution for a particular policy issue are its clarity in the policy process and in institutional responsibilities, credibility and leadership. A broadly-shared view is that for agriculture, rural development and food security policies, interaction with the line ministries in charge of agriculture and rural development is not sufficient. Policy processes need to involve other actors, such as coordinating ministries (e.g. Finance, Planning, Prime Minister's Office or Office of the President), Parliament, provincial authorities, NGO networks and the media, while mobilizing strong interest and commitment from development partners.

- In Mozambique under FNPP, the posting of a national consultant in the Ministry of Planning has been quite instrumental in integrating food security concerns in the country's second PRSP (the so-called PARPA II), triggering a review of the existing food security policy and mainstreaming food security in programmes at the provincial level.

Box 13: Role of institutions

In recent years, there has been a growing appreciation for the contribution of institutions to economic growth and development, defined as “the rules of the game in a society”. (North, 1990:3) Institutions must be distinguished from the organizations that are developed to organize individuals to achieve defined objectives. North used the analogy of sport to illustrate the difference. (North, 1990: 4-7) There are rules (institutions) and players (organizations) in society. The rules define how the game is to be played, while the objective of the team – the organization – is to play by the rules to win the game.

In an authoritative account of the development experience of selected countries, Rodrik (2003:10) felt sufficiently confident to proclaim as follows: “Institutions that provide dependable property rights, manage conflict, maintain law and order, and align economic incentives with social costs and benefits are the foundation of long-term growth”.

In UNCTAD’s Trade and Development Report, 2006, Rodrik is quoted to the effect that the disappointing results of developing country policy reforms during the 1980s and 1990s illustrated the importance of the institutional underpinnings of market economies. (UNCTAD, 2006, p. 50) Market-based policy reform, in the absence of a rule of the game such as dependable property rights and those that manage conflict, did not produce the desired outcome.

(based on the South Africa case study by McCarthy)

In many case studies of FAO policy assistance activities, authors lament that FAO always had the Ministry of Agriculture as its counterpart, while it would have been more efficient and productive to work with others too. The Ministry of Agriculture often has only limited influence and political clout and this affects the credibility of the results of policy programmes and the effective implementation of recommendations. This could even backfire on FAO’s reputation. For several authors, broadening FAO’s contacts with a larger array of government institutions would certainly enhance the effectiveness of the assistance it provides.

- In Bangladesh, Lai explains that the counterpart agency had a limited mandate and limited authority in food-safety issues, particularly in legislative, regulatory and standard-setting roles. For action to occur, the government must be engaged at a high enough level (i.e. supra-ministerial and cross-sectoral) to secure the required degree of commitment, coordination and cooperation across sectors and subsectors. Future initiatives will need greater efforts in identifying and targeting key players and determining suitable entry-points for policy assistance.

The ability to identify and mobilize a “policy champion” in the national context who can fully support or even drive the initiative appears to be critical. The choice of the policy champion sometimes is a difficult and sensitive task. Analysts have found that organizations are more receptive to information if it is produced internally. A legitimate inside sponsor or champion can improve the likelihood that the recommendations will be owned, agreed and acted upon.

Key stakeholders may also be identified on the basis of their potential blocking power. Opponents often expect to be potential losers whereas supporters are either promoters or potential winners. Losers are clearly aware of their potential losses and quick to oppose change, while winners are much less aware that they are likely to benefit from the change in the short or the long term. Losers have incentives to organize to protect the *status quo*; winners may lack clear incentives to organize for change and therefore face some problems of collective action such as building coalitions, lobbying and advocating to support policy change.

Some case studies illustrate the critical role of key political players or eminent personalities who, because of their power, can jeopardize the whole process if not involved. The recommended analysis and diagnosis of the national context can help avoid deadlocks later in the policy assistance process if it includes a careful and focused institutional and stakeholder analysis which understands the public and private interests, roles, mandates and power relations of the various stakeholders, including consumer perspectives.

Box 14: The role of the policy champion

Policy entrepreneurs, or policy champions, generally match a particular problem with a particular solution and push for its attention on the political agenda. Because of this, the policy entrepreneur is considered to be central to the entire process.

According to Kingdon, an individual must possess three critical qualities to be considered a successful policy entrepreneur:

- expertise, including an ability to speak for others, as in the case of the leader of a powerful interest group or an authoritative decision-maker;
- political connections or negotiating skill;
- persistence. (Kingdon, 1984).

As Kingdon explains, “many potentially influential people might have expertise and political skill, but sheer tenacity pays off”.

A policy champion, or policy entrepreneur, is a visionary advocate who clears the field for the triumph of the new policy. Policy champions at a high level of government are crucial to playing necessary advocacy roles in the executive and legislative arms. Although theoretically one may question the wisdom of having a national as leader of an international team because of the political pressures that might be brought to bear on him or her, it seems that this doesn't prevent achieving significant process benefits and impact.

(Ryan and Garrett, 2003)

5.2.6 *Creating ownership*

Creating ownership of the policy process and its results is critically important and requires a well-designed process. Ownership may be the best way to ensure an adequate degree of commitment, accountability and implementation. If ownership does not exist, most believe that the whole process may end in failure.

Ownership cannot be dictated but should be the result of exposure and voluntary commitment. As suggested by the case studies, participation is central for building ownership because it allows individual stakeholders, or coalitions formed during the process, to voice their views and interests.

As discussed previously, if local capacity exists, the analytical phase of the context analysis should be conducted jointly with counterparts to promote ownership and allow them to buy-in to the entire process from the beginning. Joint analysis during project preparation also helps establish a common understanding of policy problems and their possible solutions.

For Oxfam, the general rule to achieve a high degree of ownership is to never take the government by surprise. One way to achieve this is to design the policy assistance project with counterparts, as illustrated by the Morocco case study.

The scenario was quite different in South Africa where FAO's enthusiasm was not matched by the Government, which, as time proceeded, did not see the need to request any additional work that would not go along the lines of its own thinking. This brought the project to a standstill.

An effective way to promote ownership is to build upon national initiatives or processes so that priorities are set by the government. However, if the advice contradicts government orientations or law, it is likely to fail. As suggested earlier, seeking periodic official confirmation of the project's direction and ensuring relevance with the national context strengthens ownership. Building on earlier work done in the country can also contribute to ownership; however repeating earlier recommendations which have not been implemented without analysing the reasons for this is generally unproductive.

Box 15: Close cooperation for ownership in Morocco

The assistance was planned in close cooperation with the CGDA. A first consultant submitted a proposed structure for the CGDA. Another consultant, who had already worked in Morocco on similar topics, was recruited to provide a second opinion on the organization scheme for CGDA. He also detailed the proposals made by the first consultant with respect to the methodology and working modalities with national counterparts.

The sequencing of the consultants' intervention was excellent and FAO's follow-up both in Headquarters and at the Regional Office was well-conducted. Both the consultants worked in Rabat and could interact closely with all key stakeholders. They could also react to, include and build upon the proposals made by the national counterparts and by other structures in the Ministry of Agriculture. The national counterparts felt that they really owned the assistance project and could drive the process.

(Based on the Morocco case-study by Amouri)

5.2.7 Timeliness and time matter

Time is perceived as an essential factor of success or failure. Time can be considered from two perspectives:

- Timeliness refers to whether the assistance was provided in a timely manner at the “right place” and “right time”.
- Time refers to the amount of time required for policy change to occur and to the crucial importance of time management.

Timeliness

A timely response to a request for policy assistance is often mentioned as critical. Timeliness depends largely on the agency's degree of responsiveness, which in turn depends on its internal procedures and the availability of funding. A long period of time between a request for assistance and the delivery of assistance may affect the relevance of the whole policy assistance project because the national process may have proceeded in the absence of support or another source of support may have been used. In the Libya case study, Zouaoui shows that a lag time of one year made it difficult to keep seed issues at the forefront of the Government's priorities and interest.

There is also a consensus that bad timing is a “process killer” and this is illustrated by several case studies. FAO country representatives regularly identify delays and difficulty in providing a timely response to a request for assistance as the greatest impediment, along with limited resources, to the effectiveness of FAO policy work. (FAO, 2001) Countries and donors also frequently raise this as a major problem.

The ability to answer pressing needs affects credibility significantly. It is also important to provide advice when a “policy window” opens in the national context. Providing a timely response is easier if the agency already has been proactive by placing an advisor in the country and monitoring the context and if financial and administrative procedures are agile.

Time

Policy change takes time and good time management is crucial. Time is required for planning the process, for the work of experts in the country and for the wrap-up phase.

Policy change takes time mainly because changing institutions takes time. Several cases illustrate the fact that policy assistance projects require long-term interventions when institutional reforms are at stake. Specific situations (e.g. post-conflict contexts) or difficult issues (e.g. land-policy reforms) need time to be addressed properly and require continuing assistance and support. Several cases highlighted that the continuity of assistance sometimes is affected by changes in representatives, new

donor priorities or modified strategies over time. The immediate consequence and lesson is that persistence matters.

However, for processes of long duration, it is important to maintain momentum and the interest of counterparts, as illustrated by FAO's experience in Bangladesh. This can be achieved through seminars, common progress reports and workshops that keep concerned actors actively mobilized in the assistance programme.

5.2.8 Capacity-building is central to policy assistance

Including a capacity-building component in all policy assistance activities is important to many experts and institutions surveyed for this study. It is a condition for sustainability and its importance will grow in the future, compared with more traditional assistance modalities.

For example, long-standing training programmes have helped facilitate the process in Angola. Compared with other agencies (except perhaps GTZ), FAO's policy assistance probably includes more capacity-building to reinforce human competence in the country. This aspect of FAO intervention is appreciated by the countries and has been highlighted as essential in the 2001 Evaluation of FAO's policy assistance. (FAO, 2001) Capacity-building can also empower farmers and their organizations (see Box 16).

In addition to the frequently used in-service capacity-building modalities like workshops, seminars and on-the-job training, movement of staff between academia and government also contributes to capacity-building. However, some modalities of capacity-building are being revisited. For USAID, for example, it is no longer clear that funding long-term education abroad (e.g. funding Masters and PhD degrees) as a means of investing in capacity-building for better future policy assistance processes is a factor of success for bringing policy change.

Box 16: Empowering farmers through policy assistance: the USAID experience

In its new approach, USAID learns from farmers as part of its process of designing policy advice. It disaggregates research and analysis supporting policy assistance below the macro level to examine information at the regional, village and household levels, paying attention to implementation in the real-world setting of a particular country.

To do that, it uses a collaborative approach that promotes farmer empowerment and mobilization to give them a voice in policy decision-making and uses their knowledge and information to better adapt policy to local conditions. Experiences seek an exchange in training, as opposed to a one-way traditional training experience. These experiences include market extension training to farmer and trader associations in countries such as Zambia, market information systems teams in Mozambique, Zambia and Mali, and other, more specific capacity-building examples geared toward technical issues for cultivating specific commodities, such as in the case of the Mozambique sweet potato team.

(USAID survey, 2007)

Several of the experts interviewed for this study argue that including capacity-building in policy assistance projects also is a strategic decision because the training context can be used as a safe environment to start, promote and strengthen open dialogue, particularly on sensitive issues.

- In Serbia, Alfredson shows that workshops and training programs helped create stakeholder understanding and investment in the notion of participatory forestry, while also building necessary supporting capacities. Consultations with stakeholders from across the forestry sector revealed very high confidence, enthusiasm and satisfaction with the progress that has been achieved to date.

Based on the findings of this study, it seems that capacity-building generally provided by multilateral or bilateral agencies (including FAO) is biased too much in favour of technical skills and is equated to training. The findings of this study suggest that "soft" skills (e.g. facilitation, negotiation and political economy analysis) should be given more importance in capacity-building activities, whether addressed

to national staff or to the staff of agencies providing policy assistance. Institutional development also should be considered more because it is a precondition for individuals to implement the skills they may have acquired through training.

Conclusions about the policy assistance process

- *Policy assistance is not only a technical matter. Process matters. It needs to be carefully and strategically designed, taking into account human factors, communication, participation, ownership, timing and capacity-building.*
- *To be effective, policy assistance must rest on trust. Trust is supported by reputation as well as tangible and credible references of past successful action.*
- *Trust takes time to build and a continuous institutional in-country presence helps.*
- *To be effective, policy assistance needs good communication about what is being done and about partial results. It should call for feedback to measure whether the process is on track and owned by stakeholders. Communication must be timely, targeted to the right people and packaged to be easily accessible and understandable.*
- *A good policy assistance process needs prior knowledge of the context (e.g. institutional context, capacity, “drivers of change” and stakeholders) and should include follow-up activities that will lead to effective implementation of recommendations.*
- *A smooth process requires facilitation, consensus-building and conflict resolution. Task forces have been effective venues for this purpose. Facilitation requires neutrality in cases where the conditions are favourable to change. In less favourable conditions, advocacy and alliance-building may be needed. Stakeholders with blocking power need to be identified and brought on board.*
- *For the agency providing policy assistance, the choice of the right counterpart is essential; the counterpart must have responsibility, credibility and leadership. Identifying a national policy champion(s) with expertise, authority, political skill and tenacity is critical. Caution is required to ensure that advice is not focused on the interests of the counterpart organization or the champion(s), but rather on the country as a whole.*
- *Ownership is essential for success and it is largely affected, both positively and negatively, by the policy assistance process. Building on past successful initiatives helps.*
- *Policy assistance inputs should be provided in a timely manner and should allow for time, because policy change can be a slow and sometimes erratic process.*
- *Capacity-building helps build trust, contributes to ownership and can offer a safe environment to discuss issues which are too sensitive to be discussed in a more formal setting. Its focus should not be exclusively on technical and analytical topics, but also on institutional development and on “soft” skills needed to design and manage the policy process.*

5.2.9 Implications

These conclusions about the policy assistance process have concrete implications for experts and organizations providing policy assistance:

For the experts

Before undertaking the assignment:

- Check the degree of trust and assess the reputation and credibility of the organization and its agents. These are factors in the effectiveness of the planned intervention.
- Check the extent to which information is available and disseminated. Assess whether initial documents about the policy assistance project were shared and circulated within the country to stakeholders.
- Request time and resources to initiate research on previous interventions conducted by other agencies or donors.
- Check responsiveness of the organization to the country's demand.
- Request clear indications on foreseeable follow-up activities.

During the assignment:

- Conduct extensive consultations with stakeholders in the government, private sector, academia and civil society to develop a sense of what is needed and by whom, what is available, who will support which options and how these issues will be monitored.

- Promote participation and ownership through national workshops, close association with national counterparts and follow-up meetings.
- Ensure donor and agency coordination.
- Identify difficulties and constraints for the organization on a timely basis.

After the assignment:

- Request resources in the organization to ensure adequate follow-up activities.

For the organization providing the policy assistance

Before the policy assistance intervention:

- Ensure a continuous in-country institutional presence.³ This in-country presence ideally should be in place prior to the policy assistance intervention. Its roles are to perform policy-intelligence activities, network and dialogue with official and shadow players and identify policy windows for forthcoming policy changes.
- If an in-country presence does not exist, make arrangements for the requested policy assistance.
- Encourage agencies' country offices to work with national ministries other than the line ministries dealing with their own sector of specialization.
- Urge the policy assistance project formulators to deliver a timely response.

During the policy assistance intervention:

- Engage in continuous policy dialogue with key stakeholders.
- Offer training opportunities to national experts at the national, regional and international levels.
- Include institutional development to strengthen national capacity in an effective way and ensure its sustainability.
- Include "soft" topics, other than technical and analytical topics, in capacity-building for policy work. Use negotiation skills extensively to overcome deadlocks and help all stakeholders understand their underlying interests (i.e. as opposed to their apparent positions).

After the policy assistance intervention:

- Mobilize resources to follow-up implementation of recommendations.
- Continue and maintain in-country policy intelligence.
- Liaise with institutions in charge of policy advice implementation.

5.3 Expertise

5.3.1 A multidisciplinary team with technical and "soft" skills

The composition of the expert team for the policy assistance programme will depend on the policy issue being addressed and the existing capacity within the country. Conducting an analysis of existing national capacities, which was discussed earlier, will be important to identify what expertise needs to be mobilized from outside the country. It is desirable to combine national, regional and international experts on the team. National experts, in addition to their specific technical abilities, possess good knowledge of the national context and its dynamics and a network of contacts that can help gain access to high-level decision-makers. National experts can also access the existing institutional memory. Regional and international experts bring technical skills, direct knowledge and experience and lessons learned worldwide or in neighbouring countries. However, over-reliance on international experts may interfere with creating national dynamics, enhancing ownership and building local capacities.

The complexity of policy work and policy processes requires mobilizing many skills and abilities. There is broad agreement that in addition to having sound technical and analytical skills in the areas related to the policy issues (e.g. economics, agriculture, forestry, trade or rural development), it is also critical

³ For an individual organization or a group of "allied" organizations. This presence does not need to be residential, but also could be ensured through regular contacts or missions.

for the team to possess skills required for the “soft” aspects of policy work (e.g. developing profiles on the political economy, political science, sociology, negotiating and facilitating). In all cases, flexibility is required to select the appropriate expertise and team composition that is well-suited to the national context and the type of policy assistance envisaged.

Box 17: Composition of the team in Bangladesh

In the case study conducted in Bangladesh, the size and structure of the project team was problematic. Besides the team leader, who was present intermittently and only for short periods of time to provide inputs, there were 14 national consultants and only one international consultant. The large number of national consultants was possibly in response to recent evaluations regarding the excessive use of international consultants and inadequate national participation in earlier FAO policy assistance interventions. Nevertheless, the large number of consultants presented challenges for the resident principal national consultant, who was responsible for team management, quality control and integration of individual inputs.

The size of this project team also appears to have been an attempt to provide subject matter specialists for the large number of programme areas (i.e. 18 in all). However, despite the size of the team, there were gaps and inadequacies in technical expertise for the type of policy assistance required (e.g. in nutrition and food safety). The limited project budget required a vast reduction in the number of international consultants. Also the team was missing key inputs for institutional and stakeholder analysis, action planning, monitoring and evaluation. A smaller team of carefully selected individuals and a better balance of experienced national and international consultants would have been preferable under the circumstances.

(based on the Bangladesh case-study by Lai)

The ability to understand the decision-making process is an important “soft” skill that was stressed by several organizations (i.e. DFID, EC, ODI and OPM). This refers to the ability to capture local and internal dynamics, describe power relations and understand influential networks. If the team does not possess the ability to understand the informal politics, the policy assistance project may have difficulty moving matters forward effectively.

Box 18: Drivers of Change

Failure of development programmes is often explained by a lack of political will within the country. However, it is rare to find attempts to deal directly with the sources of this problem or to conduct serious analysis of where the country is, where it is coming from, or where it is heading.

“Drivers of Change” is the name of a learning exercise at the national level that recognizes these weaknesses and tries to overcome them by reversing the relationship between country-focused understanding and programme design. It is an effort to adopt a more historically-informed, less technocratic approach to assistance. The exercise focuses on the way change happens and how economic, social and political factors interact over the long term.

(Based on Drivers of Change and Development in Malawi, David Booth, Diana Cammack, Jane Harrigan, Edge Kanyongolo, Mike Mataure and Naomi Ngwira, 2005-2006)

Other “soft” skills that are required throughout the process are facilitation and negotiation. These skills are particularly important in cases where conditions are not favourable to policy change or where there are strong disagreements or conflicts about the policy issue. Negotiation and conflict-resolution skills are of paramount importance because most policy assistance projects involve dealing with people and organizations with different attitudes, opinions, interests and working practices. Some contributors expressed the view that policy change is ultimately the outcome of a process in which coalitions form blocks to exclude or minimize the gains of other coalitions with diverging interests.

Box 19: Negotiation skills

Negotiation skills enable people with differing objectives or perceptions of these objectives to communicate, discuss and agree on something. Negotiation skills are required when it is recognized that either visible or hidden conflicts may threaten an entire process.

Conflicts of interests are very often part of policy formulation processes because of interactions between potential winners and losers. What really matters is not whether one group may actually lose, but whether a group *perceives* that it may lose something with the introduction of the policy change. For this reason, policy analysts must possess skills to overcome existing, growing or potential conflicts.

Negotiation skills are useful for experts who must facilitate the process among stakeholders who may have incompatible or opposite positions on a particular issue. By using these skills, policy analysts help stakeholders go beyond bargaining their positions to negotiating based on their interests. People may then recognize underlying motivations and needs that are compatible with those of other parties in the long run.

5.3.2 Mobilizing high-level technical capacity

While “soft” skills are important, sound technical and analytical expertise also are required in all policy assistance initiatives. Experience and high-level technical and analytical expertise give more strength and credibility to recommendations. Sound technical capabilities can help unravel complex issues and ensure that the assistance is relevant to the context, meets the identified needs and is based on the latest knowledge and world experience. High-level expertise also is critical for simplifying complex issues and offering credible narratives or “stories” that policy-makers can use to form their decisions. As stated by Keeley, “The effect of narratives is to close down policy space, policy space being understood as the room to pursue different approaches to policy”. (Keeley, 1997)

Policy narratives affect policy-making in several ways. They:

- name and classify (i.e. “label”) groups;
- “frame” issues to be tackled;
- make policy solutions seem obvious and unquestionable;
- “depoliticize” policy decisions and recast them in the (supposedly) neutral language of science. (based on Salvatici and Quietì, 2003)

The major drawback associated with high-level expertise is overconfidence, which can occur in both the “provider” and “receiver” of policy assistance. As stated by experts interviewed in WTO and WHO, overconfidence can kill the process.

5.3.3 Building on credibility and reputation

Almost all those consulted for this study mentioned the need for references or for a credible basis for experts’ advice. This is referred to as a need for evidence-based policy assistance. Adding new information to a policy-maker’s understanding can be key to persuading him or her to adopt advice. However, research has also shown the value of confirmatory research that reinforces current understanding and policies. (Weiss, 1980) Justification and criteria of legitimacy could come from:

- sound analysis of the context using proven analytical tools and techniques;
- empirical research, field activities and models through published material;
- experiences from elsewhere or from pilots conducted in-country.

Process-oriented criteria of adequacy are also necessary, although not sufficient, to assess the quality of policy analysis and policy assistance. Different criteria apply to each element of the analysis, as shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Criteria of adequacy

ANALYTIC COMPONENT	CRITERIA OF ADEQUACY
Data	Reliability, reproducibility, credibility (for exogenous data)
Information	Relevance, sufficiency, goodness of fit, robustness
Evidence	Reliability, admissibility, strength
Argument	Cogency, persuasiveness, clarity
Conclusion	Plausibility, feasibility, acceptability

Source: Majone, 1989

Agencies that rely excessively on contracting out activities to consultancy firms or individual experts run the risk of not capitalizing on the experience that could otherwise be gained. It is partly because of this reason that USAID changed its policy from relying heavily on competing private firms to provide consultancy services to a system of partnering with several US academic institutions that allows for learning and capitalizing on knowledge.

Credibility is sometimes difficult to obtain but very easy to lose. This is particularly the case when there is no shared, common position on a specific issue and contradictory messages are sent by experts from different parts of the same organization. This tends to undermine the reputation of the organization as a reliable source of consistent advice. This can affect the overall credibility of the organization's advice, even in areas where there is consensus. Transparent internal processes of review and quality performance appraisal mechanisms also contribute to strengthen credibility.

Policy-makers seem to respond better to advice that comes from institutions with a reputation for quality, credibility and objectivity. In an environment where interest groups bring their own views to influence major policy questions, a reputed independent view from an institution of standing can have a strong impact on decisions.

Conclusions about expertise

- *Expertise in policy assistance programmes should be multidisciplinary and combine sound technical and analytical skills (e.g. economics, agriculture, forestry, trade or rural development), with skills for the "soft" aspects of policy work (e.g. political economy, sociology, negotiation and facilitation).*
- *Teams of experts should include a mix of national and regional or international experts.*
- *Experience and high-level technical and analytical expertise give more strength and credibility to recommendations. However, high-level experts may exude overconfidence, which can kill the process.*
- *Advice must be based on evidence (e.g. analysis, research, lessons from elsewhere and/or pilots) and its effectiveness is supported by the reputation of the agency providing the assistance.*
- *To be more effective, organizations providing policy assistance need to strengthen their "soft" skills required to design and manage the policy process, either by recruiting staff with those skills or by capacity-building.*

5.3.4 Implications

The importance of expertise in policy assistance has the following implications for experts and organizations:

For the experts

Before undertaking the assignment:

- Request time to build a well-composed team including both national and international experts who can understand the drivers of change and local dynamics. The presence of one prominent figure in the team can help strengthen credibility.
- Assess the team's and organization's reputation and credibility and, if necessary, strengthen them (e.g. through dissemination of academic references, networks, etc).
- Ensure that team members demonstrate real knowledge and understanding of the national policy debate and local dynamics.
- Work out ideas and suggestions within the team and, prior to intervention, promote policy dialogue about the issues for which the policy assistance is requested.
- Request clear indications of foreseeable follow-up activities from the technical agency providing policy assistance.

During the assignment:

- Spend time developing an in-depth understanding of the decision-making process, including the influence of in-country policy networks and shadow networks.
- Communicate your organization's experience and references through evidence (e.g. analysis, research, lessons from elsewhere and/or pilots). Use credible references to support recommendations and influence the policy process.

For the team leader

- Demonstrate specific skills including:
 - management capacity to ensure coherence and unity of the team;
 - ability to enhance the authority and credibility of the team as a whole;
 - capacity to facilitate communication and practice negotiation within the team and with government officials or decision-makers.
- Be aware of the need to balance sound analytical and technical skills with "soft" skills and use those skills at critical stages in the policy assistance process.

For the organization providing policy assistance

Before the policy assistance intervention:

- Avoid the "one size fits all" approach to providing expertise.
- Mobilize multidisciplinary teams:
 - Build a specific team for each case of policy assistance and adapt a combination of experts to the local conditions and context.
 - Include a mix of national and regional or international experts.
 - Include facilitation- and negotiation-related tasks in the experts' terms of reference.

During the policy assistance intervention:

- Invest in monitoring contacts and networking at national, regional and international levels:
 - Use country intelligence to identify policy priorities and adapt regional and global contexts.
 - Identify and mobilize policy champions.
 - Capitalize on every success, including using media, to strengthen the reputation of the process.

After the policy assistance intervention:

- Assess the performance of experts.

5.4 Management and Coordination

5.4.1 Good design

One factor for success in policy assistance is to have a well-designed activity. Good design includes the following characteristics:

- a process that includes consulting with the main actors and formulating a detailed work plan, including a realistic schedule and clear responsibilities, that fosters national ownership and anticipates progressive handover to the national authorities;
- clear objectives, outcomes, outputs and assigned responsibilities;
- flexibility to adapt to changing national conditions, priorities and needs;
- willingness to take risk in innovations and accept the consequences for mistakes or failures;
- resources sufficient to achieve expected outputs and outcomes and to conduct the analyses required to understand the context of the policy assistance activity and to identify key stakeholders;
- a monitoring and evaluation mechanism that allows for the possibility of making adjustments or reformulating the activity if needed.

Flexibility

Policy processes require time and may become more complex as they proceed. Flexibility is important in managing policy assistance activities to be able to adapt to a changing environment and respond to changes required in the content or duration of the activity. This does not eliminate the need for precise work plans with clear responsibilities, benchmark outputs and deadlines which form the basis for the accountability of all those involved in the process (FNPP Food Security, 2007).

Box 20: FAO-Netherlands Partnership Programme (FNPP)

The FNPP is a policy-oriented programme characterized by:

- Flexibility; its design is based on clearly-specified outputs and outcomes and on a series of ten basic principles. This allows for the possibility of adapting to local needs and conditions.
- A medium-term perspective; the programme is designed to last for a period of three years with possible extensions. This allows activities to be planned over a time horizon that is sufficient to generate outputs and some policy outcomes.
- Being supportive of innovation; one of the three main objectives of this policy-oriented programme is “to support the reform within FAO by substance-driven innovations, including FAO’s working method at the country level”. It therefore encourages innovation and risk-taking.
- Emphasis on learning from the experience generated by its activities.

The second phase of the programme (2004-2008) is currently active in more than 15 countries, providing policy assistance in three thematic areas: food security, forests and agrobiodiversity. The total budget is EURO 20 million (or USD 30 million at current exchange rate). The programme has demonstrated how it can be responsive to government needs and generate policy outcomes at the country level, by using the knowledge and expertise in the Organization.

The risk of innovations

Pilots that test new policy modalities can be instrumental in generating information to convince policy-makers of the value of proposed policy changes. Pilots contain a certain element of risk (such as testing new approaches or methodologies, for example) which governments and technical and funding agencies must be ready to accept. At UNICEF, experts interviewed for this study recognize that

donors are willing to innovate and pay for the consequences of possible failures. This is strong encouragement for UNICEF to try new approaches.

Sufficient resources

The duration and budget of policy projects often are not commensurate with the objectives of the policy assistance activity or the national policy process. This is particularly the case for the frequently utilized FAO Technical Cooperation Projects (TCPs) which are characterized by short durations (i.e. maximum of two years) and relatively modest budgets (i.e. less than USD 400 000). The inadequacy of these projects for many policy assistance situations was identified during the evaluation of FAO's policy assistance activities. (FAO, 2001) FAO has fewer financial resources now than before and countries feel that the response time is much longer than it was a decade or two ago. This affects FAO's capacity to support national and subregional policy processes.

- In Argentina, Kerrigan shows that the objectives and ambitions of the project were above what could be expected to be achieved by a project like an FAO TCP with its limited duration and budget.
- In Saint Lucia, Renard raised a similar point although the fisheries policy project was part of a longer process and benefited over a long period of time from support from the FAO Fisheries Officer working in the FAO subregional office in Barbados.

Evaluation mechanisms

Several of the agencies consulted in this study emphasized the importance of evaluation mechanisms. What is still lacking in most organizations is a systematic use of evaluations to draw lessons that can help improve the way policy assistance activities are managed.

- At FAO, experience shows that ongoing evaluation and quality control should be more systematic to ensure that analysis of issues is comprehensive, well-grounded in theory and practice, objective and adheres to high quality standards.
- At USAID, evaluation is seen as an activity accompanying the policy assistance process and it is therefore conducted throughout the life span of the process. The "mid-life evaluation", conducted half way through the project, enables mid-course adjustments and highlights elements of policy assistance that have yielded good results and which could be replicated in similar policy assistance projects. In some cases, it can also lead to closing down unsuccessful programmes. The final evaluation helps to crystallize experiences and provides inputs for cross-country learning.
- At UNDP and FAO, evaluation results increasingly require a "management response" where managers are asked to react to evaluation recommendations and lessons learned and indicate what kind of follow-up action they will take.
- At the World Bank, quality control and evaluation are omni-present (see Box 21) to the extent that some staff members believe that control and evaluation requirements have become excessive and tend to stall some Bank operations.

The results of policy assistance projects can be seen only after a long period of time which is usually beyond the duration of a project. This is particularly true for projects with a large capacity-building component. The result may be that long-term projects may prove very effective at the end of their process but may reflect poorly in short-term evaluations. This is why it is important to conduct assessments of policy outcome some time after completion of the project. As suggested by Jawara in the case of FAO in Sierra-Leone, country offices should continue to monitor the adoption of policy recommendations and provide feedback to relevant units in Regional Offices or Headquarters.

Box 21: Evaluation and quality control at the World Bank

At the World Bank, there are several internal mechanisms to increase the quality of the Bank's overall performance, including its policy assistance activities. Two of these mechanisms are the Quality Assurance Group (QAG) and the Independent Evaluation Group (IEG).

Established a decade ago, the QAG is part of the office of the Managing Director of Operations. It was established to ameliorate the Bank's performance, with special emphasis on the quality of its operations and their results, and to facilitate internal learning from the Bank's own experience in defining and implementing its policies, programs and general activities.

QAG selects projects, policies or operations in a random manner to render a study sample large enough to be able to generalize conclusions. However, all activities in the Bank are encouraged to be prepared for the possibility of being studied, which in itself can work as a quality-assurance incentive. Projects considered to be at risk of not complying with their development objectives are paid particular attention.

An assessment is conducted by a team of from three to five members, comprised of internal and external operations personnel and experts – including a country expert – for each exercise. These teams follow a series of quality standards and assessment methodologies. Focus areas include project relevance, approach, implementation, risk assessment and management and examine aspects of the project including technical, financial and economic, poverty and social, environmental, fiduciary and policy and institutional aspects.

The IEG is an independent group that evaluates the Bank's main activities and projects at the end of their life-span. The IEG has a double function: On the one hand, evaluation by IEG exerts pressure on project teams to perform better. On the other IEG evaluations add on the Bank's experience by analyzing overlooked factors and extracting important lessons – i.e. what works, what does not. Sometimes it examines the performance of a portfolio of projects both finalized and on-going in a "performance assessment". IEG's evaluation tools used in promoting accountability and learning are project reviews, country assistance evaluations, sector and thematic reviews and process reviews.

(based on the World Bank survey by Gonzalez, 2006)

5.4.2 Operation of policy assistance interventions

Problems of bureaucracy

There is a broad agreement that the flexibility and agility required for policy assistance does not coexist well with complex administrative and bureaucratic rules.

In several of the projects reviewed, complex bureaucratic procedures and centralized decision-making in administrative and financial matters were felt to be a hindrance to effective operations because they were a source of delays and frustration, particularly in national counterpart agencies. However, as stated by ODI, there is a clear need for safeguards in the use of resources, particularly in countries where transparency is not guaranteed and corruption is present. Requests for numerous and lengthy reports are not recommended. Unnecessary bureaucracy affects the reputation of the technical agency providing the support. This type of problem is present in larger organizations such as FAO, the World Bank, WHO and the EC.

On-going monitoring

Effective operational management should monitor the status of project delivery and can serve as an early-warning system of project failure. In case of project failure, procedures should be in place to close an activity. FAO's Field Programme Management Information System (FPMIS) offers a good example of such a system where all information relevant to a particular project can be kept and compared with information that keeps track of progress and alerts to problems of delivery. Links between information systems and actual decision-making need to be strong.

- In Sierra Leone, several operational problems that could have been avoided created some dissatisfaction for the government.

- While the project formulation phase of the Agriculture Sector Review was very good and consultations with the Government and the creation of an Agriculture Sector Review National Steering Committee were commended, the choice of some specialists was questioned.
- The time frame and arena were appropriate, but there were some concerns about time management once the process began because some international specialists left before completing their tasks. International specialists arrived at poorly synchronized times as the project unfolded, causing planning and coordination bottlenecks.

Some of these problems could have been avoided if personnel procedures were more flexible and decentralized or if there was more flexibility in budgets. In the case of FNPP (FNPP, 2006), some activities were postponed or aborted when it was realized that there were no prospects for achieving outcomes due to institutional dysfunctions or in case too many donors were involved. Other activities benefited from additional resources because they were particularly successful, presented opportunities for follow-up or additional work, or generated additional demand for support from governments. Flexible delivery of inputs is also critical to fit with the pace of the policy process.

Responsiveness

Another important aspect of the operations of policy assistance activities is the responsiveness of the institution. (FAO, 2001) Good responsiveness enables the organization to seize opportunities and respond effectively to requests for assistance. Responsiveness is made possible by the rapid availability of funds and procedures for approving administrative actions.

- The FNPP offers an interesting case where a fund has been made available to FAO based on a very broad policy framework which stipulates the focus area of the programme (e.g. food security, forests and agrobiodiversity), ten basic principles and the broad outcomes the programme is expected to generate. The authority to approve activities is left to theme coordinators who can mobilize resources very rapidly; several activities were initiated in three months compared to a "normal" average response time of more than six months. Annual programme reporting and evaluation (i.e. mid-term and final) will check whether principles were respected and expected outcomes were generated.

5.4.3 Internal organization of the policy assistance provider

Certain factors about the internal organization of the agency providing policy assistance appear to be important for the effectiveness of the support provided. These include:

- strong country-level leadership capable of dialoguing with the government and other stakeholders in the process of setting the policy agenda;
- clear delineation of responsibilities, coordination and dialogue within the organization to avoid conflicts;
- focus on outcomes rather than outputs or activities;
- good technical support by regional or central offices for country-level activities to ensure quality;
- allocation of resources for monitoring the policy context and climate to identify opportunities for proposing timely policy assistance and for follow-up during the post-project period.

Strong Leadership

A strong country office and leadership is essential to identify possible needs for policy assistance, engage in a high-level policy dialogue with government and monitor implementation of policy recommendations.

- The EC promotes policy dialogue at the country level to identify needs and monitor assistance programmes and projects. It reviews national strategies when they exist and identifies ways of supporting them. Staff members of EC delegations prepare country strategy papers which define priority areas for action in two selected focal sectors. EC money is then channelled to these focal sectors. A similar approach is adopted at the regional level, in cooperation with regional economic organizations.

- The Morocco case study also emphasizes the potential role of the FAO representative in conducting initial consultations with the government at the time of identifying or formulating policy assistance activities and during implementation, when the representative should monitor progress and ensure follow-up. Identifying needs for policy assistance could be conducted through periodic workshops.

Skills development

Country offices need to develop the skills to engage in a policy dialogue. Skills development can also be supported by decentralization of resources (as in the case of UNICEF) to allow for experimentation and policy innovation. This in-country capacity does not need to be developed by each organization but could be developed more efficiently jointly by the organizations in the country, or by a subset of them (e.g. the UN Country Team) to avoid duplication and waste of resources.

- UNICEF has taken steps to improve policy dialogue and assistance. One step has been a learning process to engage in dialogue with finance ministries. It has also identified the need to make its staff more knowledgeable in finance and public accounts and to give them the tools to press for “socially responsible” budget-making. It is therefore currently training its staff in economic and finance principles and analysis of public expenditures.
- FAO is training its country representatives in the area of policies and strategies; its first course was organized in May/June 2007. The organization is also implementing a training programme to develop staff’s negotiation skills.

Clear responsibilities

Delineation of responsibilities and coordination is needed in the institution providing policy assistance to prevent any risk of cacophony, competition or even conflicts among units involved in a particular activity. In the absence of clear responsibilities, there is a risk of reduced effectiveness and damage to the institution’s credibility. Often several units of the same agency intervene and this requires coordination to avoid overlaps or even conflicts.

Conclusions about management of policy assistance

- *Good management of policy assistance starts with good design of policy projects or programmes, where stakeholders are consulted, flexibility is allowed to adapt to changing circumstances and resources are sufficient to analyse the policy context and include monitoring and evaluation mechanisms. Good management also includes closing down activities when there are no prospects for achieving outcomes.*
- *Administrative and financial procedures should allow for initiative (e.g. responsiveness to requests for assistance, rapid recruitment procedures and flexibility in budget lines, programme duration and scheduling of delivery of inputs), while safeguarding the proper use of resources.*
- *Management should be decentralized, while maintaining a strong country office and leadership able to monitor the policy climate and engage in high-level policy dialogue.*

6

CONCLUSIONS

Policy is a complex and difficult topic. Policy assistance is even more challenging because it entails interaction between “insiders” – those who are responsible for developing policies – and “outsiders” – those who can provide assistance or are willing to engage in a policy partnership. This interaction, while deliberate and welcomed by those involved, is complex because it involves people with different backgrounds, cultures, visions and interests who aim to achieve change that can be perceived as a success by all players. Framed like this, policy assistance appears to be a very challenging field of work.

The only two factors that external players can manage in providing policy assistance are selecting the expertise and designing a process to influence the national policy process. All the other factors that influence the context in which external players operate (e.g. national and international dimensions, competition, culture, history, reputation, visible and hidden local dynamics, etc.), are beyond their control. Fortunately, expertise and process are critical factors that can make policy assistance effective and the context can be dealt with creatively through good management of these two factors. This study clearly highlights the central role of the policy assistance process and if observed trends in policy assistance continue, they will likely reinforce the critical importance that process plays in policy assistance effectiveness.

As a consequence, the major lesson for international or bilateral agencies is that the way policy assistance has been regarded for decades has to be significantly amended. If technical soundness traditionally has been given prominence in determining the effectiveness of policy assistance, this is no longer sufficient; technical skills must be complemented and preceded by “soft” skills.

In this paper, implications have been identified for experts and organizations providing policy assistance. One major question remains: If the suggested “good practices” are applied, will it be sufficient to make successful policy assistance projects? It is very important for organizations that provide policy assistance to elaborate on the implications identified here and put them into practice in their future activities, so that once these implications are evaluated, conclusions made here will be either reinforced or challenged and thus contribute to the ultimate production of authoritative guidelines.

To move forward with this endeavour, several steps could be implemented in the wake of this study:

- **Disseminate the results of this study and identify their implications in the context of each individual organization providing policy assistance.**

At FAO, this would entail organizing a series of internal workshops at headquarters and possibly in regional offices to further elaborate the implications highlighted in this report and put them in context for FAO. This process would generate recommendations on how policy assistance could be improved and those recommendations could be implemented in new policy assistance activities. If these good practices led to success, then the next step would be to draft policy assistance guidelines.

- **Develop a method of policy intelligence and test it in a few countries.**

The participants of the FAO workshop in Rome in April 2007 agreed on the usefulness of establishing country policy-intelligence systems to contribute to improving the effectiveness of policy assistance. The interest of several partners, such as CIRAD, FAO, ODI and OXFAM, was confirmed in March 2008 during a workshop on policy intelligence held at FAO headquarters. The challenge in designing these systems is to find a balance between the information needed and the resources required to develop and maintain that information.

The immediate step would be to design a prototype of an intelligence system that would provide the essential information without necessitating tools for information collection and analysis that would be too elaborate and costly.

The second step then would be to test this prototype in one or two countries, possibly as a cooperative endeavour. One possibility would be to try it out as a common system for all UN agencies in one of the One-UN countries. Another possibility would be to test it in a country where other multilateral or bilateral agencies or NGOs which were actively involved in this study (e.g. CIRAD, GTZ, Oxfam or DFID) would be interested in working with FAO.

- **Reinforce the results of this study by analysing some further experiences.**

The framework used in this study to analyse selected FAO policy assistance projects could be applied to projects of other cooperating partners to cross-check, validate or challenge findings. CIRAD staff at the Rome workshop suggested conducting a comparison of projects conducted by FAO and the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs because it potentially would allow for more lessons to be learned on both sides. Another way would be to analyse the outcomes of newly-launched activities that would adopt the practices recommended in this report.

- **Network.**

The informal network created through consultations during this study and participation in the Rome workshop could be strengthened. There is considerable interest in the international community about issues related to the effectiveness of policy assistance. The group constituted in Rome, perhaps reinforced by other organizations that could not make it to the April workshop, could liaise and cooperate together. The group could have periodic meetings to review progress made on suggestions included here and others that will be formulated as work progresses.

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Annex I

Angola – Support to a Decentralized Land Management Programme by Frédéric Dévé¹

1. Introduction

Two thirds of Angola's population depends on agriculture for food, income and employment, and women provide the larger share of the agricultural labour force. It is estimated that 80 percent of farmers are smallholders, generally producing little or no surplus, with very low productivity. The average area cultivated annually by a family – using manual soil preparation methods – normally ranges between one and three hectares.

The State is the owner of rural land. Agricultural rural land use is granted by concessions. These concessions, the related titles and cadastre are currently handled by the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (MINADER) and in the process to be gradually transferred to the Ministry of Environment and Urbanization (with a persisting lead role of MINADER regarding rural land policy). In 2005, the tenure situation was the following:

- The total area cultivated by the peasant sector was at least 3.2 million ha, and involved 2.2 million poor peasant families. Average area per family: 1.4 ha. Titling exists in MINADER for only three percent of the area concerned.
- The total area effectively cultivated/controlled by the entrepreneurial sector is poorly known, but it is at least a rough 2.2 million ha for a few thousands commercial farms (4300 being registered). Average area per enterprise is in the range of 515 ha.

De facto, almost all the currently titled area is in the hands of the commercial sector.

There is thus a dramatic lack of tenure security for the peasant sector, which has only three percent of its cultivated land officially registered. The sector is exposed to uncertainties and potential land use conflicts: a) among communities, b) between peasant communities and the commercial agricultural sector, or c) with other land concessions (mining, forests, etc.).

2. Context

The peace accord of April 2002 started a new era for Angola. The country has become a presidential Republic, with a multi-party political system in place. Priority tasks identified by the Government are to reconstruct the economic and social infrastructures, re-launch the national economy, and combat poverty. A new Land Law for both urban and rural land was approved in August 2004, and a Territorial Management Law was voted by Parliament that same year. Aiming at rural food security and poverty reduction and simultaneously seeking to reinforce the commercial agricultural enterprises, the Government has intended since the late 1990s - and today with even more strength - to establish a decentralized system of rural land administration using the principle of the recognition of the peasantry's historical land rights, and based since 2002 on the objective of promoting for a dynamic development of entrepreneurial agriculture.

Angola has considerable agricultural potential and very substantial forest resources. Agriculture is a priority sector not only for food security and poverty reduction, but also for the diversification of the oil-and-diamonds dominated national economy. Since 2000, Angola has undertaken a process of macroeconomic stabilization, focusing predominantly on monetary and exchange rate policies, which have improved the functioning of the money market, reduced inflation and unified the formal and informal foreign exchange markets. However, the overvaluation of the national currency constitutes a risk for agricultural development as it is detrimental to the competitiveness of agriculture and constrains the reestablishment of a strong agricultural export sector ("*Dutch disease*" syndrome). In

¹ By **Frédéric Dévé**, FAO Consultant, based on **Dévé, F.**, Lesson learning in policy assistance - Angola Case study - Support to a Decentralized Land Management Programme, January 2007.

addition, State budget allocations for the agricultural sector are low (2.5 percent of the national budget expenditure in 2006 and 2007).

The 2004 Land Law recognizes rural communities' historical rights on their communal land. However, there is still widespread ignorance of the Law and its regulation in the field, and there are a number of issues concerning the interpretation of the Law at provincial and community level. The land policy challenge in Angola is to foster a regulated, balanced, equitable and viable access to land and to set the base for a sustainable management of land and other natural resources linked to land use. It is to secure land tenure in an equitable manner for: i) rural communities (their "commons"); ii) individuals, women, peasant families and individual farmers using communal land; and iii) commercial farmers and other private land holders, so that their livelihoods and investments are secured, that land is used in a productive and sustainable manner, and that they are interested in the sustainable management of the existing natural resources.

3. Policy Assistance Process

During the national policy dialogue and process that took place since the late 1990s, the policy message of FAO can be summarized as follows:

"Central and Provincial Governments, and other actors, principally the Municipalities, communities, civil society organizations and donor community should secure peasant communities land tenure through communal land demarcation and titling. This process is not only a matter of tenure security (for land users, be they peasant communities or private farms), it is also a needed path to ensure poverty reduction and rural food security (right to food). It is also a critical requirement and pre-condition for viable rural economic development and for sustainable management of natural resources. This process should take place through the establishment of a decentralized land administration and management capacity, and it should be based on participation and capacity development of all actors concerned by rural communities land rights."

This policy message can be summarized in turn into four major policy recommendations:

- Create the conditions for community land delimitation and titling.
- Develop of a reliable cadastre.
- Establish a new legal regulatory framework.
- Prepare a national land policy.

The FAO policy assistance process has unfolded based on these premises. After preliminary interventions in land conflicts since 1999, FAO has implemented a series of projects addressing the issue of land tenure and aiming at the establishment of an institutional capacity for land management. These projects were supported by a series of Donors and by national and international NGOs. Pilot field work undertaken focused in a four provinces (Bengo, Benguela, Huambo and Huila) and it has significantly accompanied and influenced an intense and dramatic policy debate on land at national level.

The project analysed here - "Strengthening a decentralized administration intervention to promote equitable rural development in Huila Province- MTF/ANG/031/NET" is thus part of a bundle of technical assistance projects. Rather than focusing exclusively on this project and on its recommendations, the case study examines these projects as a whole – as a "policy assistance process" – over the period 2002-2006.

After the experience gained in 1999 in the Bengo Province with conflicts resolution, a seminal project (TCP/ANG/0168) was launched in September 2001 with the basic objective to:

- Create a minimal national capacity to implement land delimitation and to ensure more secure land tenure, especially for internally displaced persons.
- Promote and assist in the preparation of a Land Law and legal framework.
- Prepare a follow-up project and attract Donor's interest.

A third project was then funded as a follow-up targeting the province of Huila. The objective was to launch an initial programme for decentralized land management, as a pilot. A series of new projects were later formulated and funded by other donors (The Netherlands, Sweden, the USA, and Italy) with similar objectives covering Benguela, Huambo and again Huila provinces. Ultimately, a major FAO project funded by the European Commission (approximately Euro 3 000 000) is starting in January 2007 for a duration of three years with the objective to draw on the experience gained so far in these four provinces and to:

- Carry out land administration experiences at municipal level in three provinces.
- Implement a natural resources management system in selected pilot areas.
- Develop a land studies centre to supply decision makers with information, analysis and decision support concerning land policy, land management, family farming, and other land tenure related issues.

4. Expertise

The legal assistance and expertise provided by FAO was able to support concretely the Law formulation process, especially in the final phase of its preparation by taking into consideration experts' views and the stakeholders' views expressed at a national consultation. It was thus a key contribution to the national policy and legal debate concerning rural land and land use.

The technical expertise provided by FAO offered well appreciated training in delimitation and titling of community land, and it has build a critical mass of national capacity to conduct such kind of work.

As a whole, the policy assistance process was based on a strong expertise support and personal commitment from the responsible FAO technical officer, who was able to establish very close working relationship with national project staff, MINADER, NGOs and Donors. The expertise provided was able to mobilize the Donor community interest on land tenure issues in Angola through regular meetings with Ambassadors and other Donors representatives. This helped to ensure continuity in funding field projects. The expert was also and above all able to identify and use the proper entry points to address the policy issue.

He also focused in a participatory and decentralized manner on aspects such as:

- Sensitization to farmers rights to land in the existing legal context.
- Mobilization and training of NGOs.
- Encouraging participation at NGO and at grassroots and community level in the national consultation on the Land Law.
- Mobilization of relevant administrations (Provincial, Municipal, Communal) and of traditional community authorities.
- Assistance to all concerned actors by demonstrating the paths and steps to be followed technically and administratively for land delimitation and titling in the existing legal context.
- Assistance in specific cases of conflicts resolution.

5. Management

The overall management of the policy assistance process combined effectiveness and significant results with some weaknesses.

Most positive features include:

- The organization of an open debate through in particular a high level seminar with participation of ministers, members Parliament, governors of Provinces, CSO/NGOs, donor representatives and all key institutional stakeholders concerned. This has allowed sharing the legal and policy experiences gained from other developing countries, a feature which contributed to enhance FAO's reputation.
- The comparative advantages of FAO have been fully and operationally used in this connection: i) its international and legal experience was at the service of the legal and national

policy debate, and provided recommendations whose neutrality and professionalism were highly appreciated; and ii) its capacity to convene major debate and dialogue with all stakeholders concerned, so as to facilitate the policy making process.

- The continuity of the assistance provided over years through a series of FAO projects, because of a strong fund raising capacity from a variety of donors, proper choice of the right entry points at provincial level (actors, etc.) and at thematic levels (land delimitation). The assistance provided was also given in a timely manner and in partnership with other organizations, in particular the alliance of NGOs (Rede Terra) who played a key role in stakeholder information.

On the other hand, some weaknesses were recorded:

- The FAO decision making and assistance process was perceived at Provincial level and by the FAO Representative in Angola as excessively centralized in FAO Headquarters hands. The FAO technical officer took most of the initiatives, responsibilities, decisions and held the institutional memory in his hands. The FAO Representative did take some key decisions concerning Provincial branches of MINADER while Angolan decision-makers would have preferred a more participative role and enhanced decision power.
- There was a lack of clarity in the FAO recommendations *per se* concerning the promotion and contents of land policy statements. The FAO's policy message was only made implicitly clear, i.e. through field action, but was not sufficiently explicitly worded in terms of direct recommendations to the Government of Angola.
- The lack of institutional clarity (some key regulations had not been published on time) and of national capacity (partly still a consequence of the past conflicts that have affected the country, constituted a constraint for rapid progress with project implementation. Related to that, the insufficient capacity of the Ministry of Urban and Environment Affairs (MINUA) to break the resistance of sectoral ministries to accept to merge their cadastres into one unique national cadastre managed by it contributed to a delayed implementation of this recommendation.

6. Conclusion

Land registration, expropriation, concession granting, concession auctions and community demarcation, among others, are topics that still need rules and procedures. Until they are created, there is still uncertainty concerning enforcement of the Law's tenure regulations.

The case of Angola provides some good hints on how a good link can be created between field level processes and national policy formation:

- Based on empirical experience and knowledge development at the local level, certain "models" of action (in this case community land delimitation and titling, and development of decentralized land use rights definition capacities) can be developed with credibility. These pilots can also serve to create a critical mass of skills and experience, networks of stakeholders, and awareness concerning the policy issue at stake.
- Accompanying the national policy process and dialogue requires in depth collaboration within the Ministry of Agriculture (in the case of Angola: MINADER), but and also outside the Ministry of Agriculture with Parliament, provincial authorities, NGO networks, and the public media TV/radio/press, and by mobilizing strong donor's interest and commitments.
- The role of FAO in such a policy process is eminently that of a *super partes* facilitator and catalyst, at the service of important international policy principles (human rights, poverty reduction and food security). FAO in this type of context may on occasions be driven to support actors at national level that best serve these principles, thus conducting to what can be perceived as a "lack of neutrality" or "ingerence". This may lead to tensions, but it might also be a cost involved in effective policy advice.

Annex II

Argentina – Strengthening of the National CODEX Committee by George Kerrigan¹

1. Introduction

The significance of the *Codex Alimentarius*, or Food Code, for consumer health protection was underscored in 1985 by the United Nations Resolution 39/248, in which guidelines were adopted for drafting and reinforcing consumer protection policies. The guidelines advised, "When formulating national policies and plans with regard to food, Governments should take into account the need of all consumers for food safety and should support and, as far as possible, adopt standards from the *Codex Alimentarius* or, in their absence, other generally accepted international food standards."

In the mid-1990s Argentina sought to improve its economy through greater food exports. Such expansion required knowledge of and adherence to agreements regarding the application of "Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures" (SPS) for food, originating in the World Trade Organization (WTO). Knowledge of and adherence to the Codex standards would facilitate compliance with SPS. It would also provide access to international markets, since it has become an essential element for attaining a dual objective: opening up markets and ensuring a high level of consumer health safety. The Government of Argentina, as a MERCOSUR Member State, also requested FAO's technical support to strengthen internal legislation with respect to food container standards.

Unfortunately at the peak of the financial crisis between the end of 2001 and mid 2002, the process of extending its reach was interrupted by the greatest institutional and economic crisis in the nation's modern history. By the end of 2002, Argentina had accumulated in four years a Gross Domestic Product reduction of 20 percent, leaving more than half the population below the poverty line.

At the time the project started in 1997 until its end in 2000, the economic and policy environment was not conducive to FAO policy assistance for a number of reasons. Levels of food production and income had deteriorated acutely, and the government prioritized aspects related to food availability and food distribution programmes as an immediate response, while FAO assistance was geared toward long-term aspects such as food quality and safety. In addition, there was no medium-term political agenda with respect to food safety and international standards, which limited the financial capacity and the ability to govern the institutions responsible for official certification. Moreover, a fiscal policy of public spending oriented to reducing job creation in the public sector took hold, which negatively affected the creation of the National Unit for CODEX Coordination.

Once economic stability was restored and governance improved, FAO policy assistance picked up momentum. There was a renewed focus on agricultural exports that coincided with the development objectives proposed by the project. Integration with MERCOSUR meant combining different national standards related to labelling and definitions of contents and food quality. Moreover, the post-crisis dynamism of the agricultural and agro-industrial sectors required adapting of national standards to those of the buyer countries (European Union, United States, Japan, etc.). Therefore, there was a need to create an official agency that would guarantee food quality control and restore credibility in the Argentinean institutional system, as proposed by the project.

In this regard, *The Codex Alimentarius* represented a point of reference and was perceived by most actors as a favourable forum for the ratification of norms and standards at regional and international levels. Taking on the leadership of the Codex Regional Commission, Argentina could project a regional and international image of a country complying with international standards in terms of food safety and quality. The participation of Argentina in the Codex regional Fora pushed forward the need to advance in the national adoption of Codex standards.

¹ By **George Kerrigan Richard** and **Jean Balié**, based on **G. Kerrigan Richard**, *Fortalecimiento del Comité Nacional del Codex y Aplicación de la Normativa Codex en Argentina*, February 2007.

The adoption of the Food Code of Argentina became an important antecedent for the buy-in of the project recommendations. Concerns over the adequate safety of raw materials led to the drafting of several legislative projects with respect to the reformulation of certain agencies that make up the *Sistema Nacional de Control Alimentos* (National Food Control System). However the most important aspects were to improve the way the health of consumers was protected as well as a higher consideration for the changes in demand in foreign markets.

2. Policy Assistance Process

The main player involved in the policy assistance process was the *Comisión Nacional de Alimentos* (CNA), which is the highest political authority with respect to food quality and safety issues. The leadership of the CNA alternates every two years between the Ministry of Agriculture and the Secretariat of Health Policies of the Ministry of Public Health. The other important actors were the medium producers represented by the *Confederaciones Rurales Argentinas*; the food processing industry represented by the *Coordinadora de la Industria de Productos Alimenticios* and the *Cámara de Industriales de Productos Alimenticios*; and the food product export companies, represented by the *Asociación de Productores Exportadores Argentinos*.

The policy dialogue among these actors was of rather low intensity and did not cover the entire spectrum of interested parties. For example, at the time, there was no association to represent consumer interests. The policy dialogue of the different actors was mainly centred on solving acute macro-economic problems.

The conflict of interests between public institutions, which fight among themselves for leadership in certain areas of intervention, impeded the sound implementation of the policy recommendations. The focal point moved from the Secretary of Industry and Trade to the Secretary of Agriculture (SENASA), which eventually found itself publicly discredited for repeated crises with respect to food quality certification and controls. The Under Secretariat for Food and Farming Policy then attempted to create a new official model for the certification of official controls.

FAO had a weak historical institutional presence in the country, and at the time of the request for assistance (and even when the project was implemented), there was no FAO Representation in Argentina. This made interactions with national counterparts very difficult. Additionally, FAO decision-making bodies seem to have had recurrent doubts about the pertinence of implementing such a project in Argentina. Moreover, Argentina considered itself to be a developed country and thus not in need of international technical cooperation by FAO.

3. Expertise

At the outset, the government did not perceive FAO as having the reputation and credibility to ensure that issues related to food safety and quality would be adequately addressed and introduced into the national policy and political agenda.

However, the good level of experience demonstrated by the FAO Regional Office staff responsible for technical supervision had a high positive impact on the pertinence of the proposed activities and contributed to the adoption or the partial adoption of some recommendations.

FAO's presence in the execution of the project was of low intensity since the modality of FAO's Technical Cooperation Programme (TCP) considers only short-term FAO experts and mainly the use of national consultants to implement the required assistance. This characteristic of the TCP was a clear limitation on the policy assistance, given the long-term needs and the capacities available in Argentina at the time. This factor clearly contributed to the non-adoption or the partial adoption of the some recommendations.

Experts from different fields were called to express their views about specific standards that would give better satisfaction to consumer associations, and especially to international buyers. Overall, the experts had vast experience in subjects related to Codex technical standards, but they lacked experience in decentralization and management of the provincial governments, where action is important for sustainability.

4. Management

The project adhered to its original work plan.

However, the objectives assigned to the project were very ambitious and not commensurate with the level of financial resources that FAO could actually mobilize through a TCP. The adoption of policy recommendations is generally a more complicated process than what is considered in the design of a TCP. Technical, economic, cultural, social and political dimensions are involved, with many parties having vested interests. As such, the project focus was felt to be not only ambitious but also rigid. A move towards a more facilitated process of assistance, with multiple objectives rather than narrowly focused assistance on specific issues would be more appropriate. Such a project of assistance should be more flexible in terms of interventions and focus more on the outcome of the policy assistance.

5. Lessons learned

The project resulted in a set of well implemented policy recommendations in key areas of economic activity in the food/farming sector of Argentina. However, many factors related to expertise selection, process design and project management resulted in sub-optimal policy assistance. A number of useful findings and lessons were identified:

- **Linking-up policy assistance and national policy processes.** It is important to explicitly specify (i.e. to incorporate into the project design) how the policy assistance activities interrelate with the national decision-making process within the project intervention area, with a view to identifying what the results of the assistance project will be in policy and political terms. Moreover, FAO should, to the extent possible, be a *super partes*, avoiding involvement in conflicts between public institutions based on power or the control of certain areas of public intervention.
- **Strengthening capacity of local agencies.** Institutional capacities need to be strengthened, particularly on policy formulation and implementation. To this end, it helps to identify a location for the project, preferably in an existing institution, as one key objective was to strengthen local institutional capacity in formulation and implementation of the policy.
- **Dedicating more attention to information, communication strategy and impact analysis.** One of the keys to adopting recommendations is the effort made to sensitize and train grassroots and other stakeholders about the contents of the proposed policies. In most cases, when the subject is highly politicized or the climate very unstable, the mass media can become allies and foster public support. It is also important to anticipate potential winners and losers in policy shifts so as to avoid major opposition or deadlocks.
- **Establishing strategic alliances with other international cooperation agencies active in the country.** Activities implemented by other agencies could provide opportunities for strengthening the project and creating synergies. An analysis should be made to avoid incongruence with other projects or compromise expected project results. It is also important to establish linkages with initiatives at regional level that may support the adoption of the recommendations at national level. This is especially important in countries involved in regional integration processes.
- **Ensuring the necessary policy coherence of the objectives pursued by the assistance.** It is important to have the capacity to analyse the coherence of sectoral or cross-sectoral policies. This could help build strong and realistic scenarios, including the expected effects of global trends and external pressures on national policies (e.g. in the definition of internal standards).

Annex III

Bangladesh – Developing a Plan of Action for Implementation of the National Agriculture Policy

by K.C. Lai¹

1. Introduction

FAO has been providing policy assistance to Bangladesh over a considerable period. Over the past, such assistance included agriculture sector reviews (from 1994), food security policy development (1997), formulating a national action plan for nutrition (1994-1997), and preparing a master plan for the forestry sector (1996-1999). Financial support had come mainly from UNDP's Support Services for Policy and Programme Development (TSS1-SPPD) facility as well as from FAO's own Technical Cooperation Programme (TCP).

The FAO Representation had engaged in discussions with the Bangladeshi government during formulation of the country's 1999 National Agriculture Policy (NAP) on the crops sector and had provided small amounts of FAO resources towards its preparation. The project "Developing Plan of Action for Implementation of the National Agriculture Policy" (BGD/00/006) follows on from this and the earlier policy assistance initiatives. It was formulated in response to a request from the Bangladeshi government. Approved in December 2000, with funding (USD 146 000) by UNDP, this project was executed by FAO through its Asia and Pacific Regional Office, RAP in Bangkok. The implementation period was from August 2001 to March 2003.

2. Policy Context

Development Imperatives. Bangladesh, with a population currently in excess of 140 million and an area of less than 148 000 sq km, is one of the most densely populated areas of the world. Some 80 percent of the population live in rural areas, while more than 60 percent of the labour force are currently employed in agriculture. The country's location and natural physical features render it highly vulnerable to climatic shocks (in particular floods), which have from time to time disrupted agricultural production, food supply and livelihoods.

Despite these constraints, the country had shown an improving economic performance over time, with annual growth in GDP reaching over 5 percent in the 1990s. It has also moved from being an aid-dependent to a trade-dependent economy (ODA² less than 2 percent in 2002). Nonetheless, development aid is still substantial, at some USD 1.2 billion per annum in the mid 2000s.

The NAP (1999) was the country's first comprehensive and self-contained statement of policy in the crops sector. Its overall objective was "to make the nation self-sufficient in food through increasing production of all crops including cereals". It was however only one of a plethora of national policies and action plans formulated during the 1990s that sought to provide development focus to specific sectors/ sub-sectors, and across sectors such as in the area of food security³.

Preparation of the Plan of Action (PoA) for the NAP was grounded not only in NAP objectives *per se* but also the wider development context inclusive of other policy initiatives and imperatives. These were meant to help consolidate gains made over the past decades in poverty reduction and contribute towards attainment of the MDGs. Key policy objectives revolved around achievement of:

- Productivity enhancements, to reduce the gap between potential and actual yields of major crops and between regions and districts of the country.

¹ By **K.C. Lai**, FAO Consultant, based on **Lai, K.C.**, Report of FNPP lesson learning exercise – Bangladesh Case study, November 2006.

² ODA: Official Development Assistance.

³ Food Policy (1988); National Food & Nutrition policy (1997); National Plan of Action for Nutrition (1997); Policies for Fisheries (1998), Water (1999), and Land Use (2001); Industrial Policy (1999), Comprehensive Food and Nutrition Policy (2000), National Rural Development Policy (2001). An updated National Food Policy (2006) has also been recently been prepared.

- Crop diversification, taking into account principles of comparative advantage, farming systems concepts, natural resource scarcity, market opportunities including external trade, and strategic considerations for food security.
- A revitalised agricultural technology system and advisory/extension services that was demand driven and client oriented, with the capacity to better exploit technology, including biotechnology opportunities, and their safe use.
- Agricultural marketing development to ensure fair prices to farmers, support the domestic industrial sector and avail of opportunities for agricultural export.
- Dependable and sustained food security in terms of adequate and stable supply of safe and nutritious food; improved food accessibility through enhanced purchasing power; and adequate nutrition for all, in particular women and children.

Policy Processes. Bangladesh has a fairly comprehensive range of agricultural, crop sector/sub-sector policies. It had participated in and signed commitments to various international and/or regional conventions and agreements, in such areas as trade, food security, nutrition and food safety. Structural changes in its agricultural economy also provided important dynamics for a range of national policy initiatives. Policy implementation in the food and agricultural sectors has however generally been weak, due in part to weak national institutional capacities.

Policies varied in analytical content and the extent of participation in their formulation. The NAP on which the PoA was based was largely a MOA internal effort. It contained some important weaknesses and gaps, reflecting the limited capacity in policy design within the MOA. The government had, since the mid 1990s, sought and received policy assistance from FAO on various occasions. FAO's assistance for the PoA follows from these earlier activities, which included some material support to MOA during the latter's preparation of the 1999 NAP⁴.

By 2000, reduction of poverty had become the main thrust of the country's development policy. A follow-up to the PoA, after its approval by the government, was the Development Partners Workshop (May 2003) held under the aegis of the Local Consultative Group (LCG) to discuss the PRSP process and the PoA. It was indicated that the Policy and Planning Support Unit of the MOA, with DANIDA support, had endorsed the PoA, and started using it for programme planning. This included a proposed Integrated Agricultural Development Plan (IADP) consisting of a comprehensive set of crop sector programmes that was to provide an implementation vehicle for the PoA.

Main Players The IADP initiative was supported by DANIDA but not by other donors. DANIDA had in recent years been perceived by some in government as confrontational on governance issues. The counterpart agency was the MOA's Planning Wing, which had limited influence within the ministry. Change management requisites for MOA and its 15 agencies were daunting. Complexities involved and unclear implications on jobs, power structures and political patronage possibly weakened support for the IADP within MOA. Agreed actions at the workshop were not followed through by the LCG, donors or the government. The IADP and PoA had difficulty forging strategic partnerships in implementation, and both processes were not pursued by MOA by early 2004.

There was moreover a new agriculture minister in late 2003. Increasing costs of agricultural inputs exerted political pressure on the government for more immediate and tangible support to farmers. The bureaucratic policy process was overtaken by more immediate and pragmatic considerations for accessing development funding in priority areas. This led to a new initiative for an agricultural sector review and the Actionable Policy Brief (APB) process, which commenced in early 2004, with FAO/UNDP assistance, superseding the PoA.

⁴ Bangladesh has in recent years received from FAO technical assistance in various areas ranging from biotechnology, food quality control and safety, to livelihood adaptation to climate change. FAO in 2004/05 assisted the government initiate an agricultural sector review exercise, leading to the preparation of a set of Agricultural Policy Briefs, including an Action Plan.

3. Policy Assistance Process

The PoA was prepared based on the existing 1999 NAP. Some inherent weaknesses and gaps were partially addressed by the FAO project team. However the original long list of 18 NAP programme areas were treated largely as a 'given' and used as the main organisational basis for action planning, without strategic prioritisation, at cost to analytical depth and practicality. The resultant 330 recommended actions in the PoA were akin to a wish list, with limited operational value as a planning and programming tool. Six 'strategic themes' were mentioned in the PoA. But logical links to programme areas and actions were not shown - various parts of the PoA appeared to have been written by different individuals without adequate team interaction and integration into the Plan.

The PoA team nonetheless identified important gaps in the NAP. They added food safety and agro-processing to the programme areas in recognition of the broader range of stakeholders in the transition from subsistence to commercial agriculture. But interactions with important stakeholders (including agro-processors, agri-businesses, exporters, and government agencies/ministries) were minimal and largely top-down. Careful targeting of key players was not evident. Lacking was the systematic identification and analysis of stakeholders. Consultation processes were poor in timing, scope and purpose. A Participatory Rural Appraisal was carried out but this was not well integrated into the planning process. The APB avoided some of the pitfalls of the PoA exercise in terms of stakeholder consultations and participation.

Subsequent to the PoA, a TCP project to assist the country in strengthening food quality control and comply with international standards, had attempted to facilitate the national policy dialogue on food safety. But the counterpart agency had a limited mandate for decisions on regulatory, standard setting, and legislative instruments, and failed to secure cooperation of other ministries/agencies at the appropriate level of decision making.

4. Expertise

The SPPD project document had originally envisaged a project team of four international and eight national professionals. This was changed during implementation to fourteen national professionals, including a Principal National Consultant (PNC), one international consultant (Policy and Strategy Specialist) plus the RAP team leader. The PNC was a recently retired Secretary of MOA. The Participatory Rural Appraisal, sub-contracted to a local consultancy, was carried out in late 2001 in 18 locations.

There was an attempt to provide subject matter specialist coverage over the 18 programme areas. With a limited project budget, this led to a vast increase in the number of national and commensurate reduction in the number of international consultants fielded. Terms of Reference of individual team members were however not specific enough towards identifying priority actions and assigning lead responsibilities for implementation.

Quality of the national consultants employed varied considerably. Despite the size of the team, there were gaps, such as in nutrition and food safety, and marketing of high value products, and inadequacies in technical expertise for the type of policy assistance required. Missing in the team were key inputs on institutional and stakeholder analysis and for action planning, monitoring and evaluation. A smaller team of carefully selected individuals, and a better balance of experienced national and international consultants, would have been preferable under the circumstances.

Appointment of a former senior government official as the PNC provided important inputs in terms of experience and familiarity with administrative norms/modalities. But there were also potential risks of carry over of bureaucratic approaches and mindsets; there appeared to have been insufficient provision for checks and balances in the team structure with regard to country experience and technical quality.

5. Management

The PoA process was handicapped by the large and unwieldy team structure and inadequate provision for a team leader's input in-country. The inputs of the PoA team leader and international

consultant in the country were provided on intermittent basis. These consisted of short visits to the country and, in the case of the team leader (operating from Bangkok), combined with other backstopping duties.

Although the writing and editing of the final PoA document rested with the team leader, the PNC and a senior national consultant (another former staff of the Ministry of Agriculture) were responsible for much of day-to-day operations of the project. This included supervising inputs of other consultants and initial drafting of the PoA. Personality differences between the PNC and the main international consultant arose but were not resolved, affecting team work and integration of consultants inputs at conceptual and practical levels. A more desirable arrangement would be for a project team leader to have overall responsibility for coordination, integration and gate-keeping roles in the team, and initial and final drafting of the PoA document; advisory and quality control roles ought to be retained as a RAP responsibility.

6. Conclusion

FAO regional office and the FAO Representative have played important roles in the PoA initiative and other policy assistance processes in the country, a fact well recognised by government and donors. Such assistance had nonetheless been through stand-alone projects that did not provide for a sustained process of policy dialogue and support. Although the PoA outputs demonstrated the responsiveness of FAO policy assistance to country requests, this was more re-active than pro-active. Lacking was a more holistic approach towards developing viable strategies and policies encompassing the wider agricultural sector and overall rural space. Structural changes, evolving roles of the agricultural sector and the importance of the rural-urban interface limit the usefulness of assistance provided on a narrow sub-sector basis.

Various recommended actions of the PoA incur a range of legislative, regulatory and institutional/capacity development instruments. A multiplicity of players, varying in power and influence, were implicated in these actions. Fragmented roles and responsibilities, especially in such areas as nutrition, food safety, high value crops and agricultural trade render difficult the securing of cooperation/ collaboration within and among sectors by individual government ministries/agencies and non-governmental stakeholders. Getting around this problem would require engaging the government at a high enough level (i.e. supra-ministerial), and ensuring the required degree of commitment, coordination and cooperation across sectors and sub-sectors.

Country requirements in policy support in the area of food and agriculture at sector/ sub-sector and cross-sector levels span a range of technical expertise, much of which FAO has strong capacity in, in RAP and in Headquarters. This was drawn upon during the PoA and other country assistance activities; however fuller use is not facilitated by existing operating modalities. Technical support on crosscutting policy issues poses special challenges for FAO.

In terms of lessons learned, the following are some good practices which would merit future consideration:

- Maintain an ongoing policy dialogue at country level with national and international development partners, especially the main players in the PRSP process (including Ministry of Finance or Planning), through a strategic and programmatic approach in policy assistance, instead of responding through one-off and poorly connected projects. This would help clarify country priorities, link policy assistance to a medium term priority framework for the country and harmonise with initiatives of other development partners and ensure more consistent follow-up to policy advice (implementation).
- Be more pro-active in policy assistance and adopt a holistic approach in advocacy towards developing national strategies and policies that encompass the wider agricultural sector and rural space, with particular attention on environmental threats to sustainable development, using MDGs as a reference and benchmark.
- Seek higher FAO visibility and its substantive participation in the PRSP Implementation Forum, thereby contributing technically to the policy process at the highest level.

- Include capacity development on policy design, implementation and the monitoring and evaluation of national policies for the agriculture ministry and related institutions as an integral part of policy assistance initiatives.

FAO's current arrangements for policy assistance would benefit from adjustment and further enhancement, through:

- Reconfiguring the human resource levels in the country office, whilst revising Terms of Reference of the FAO Representative to include regular policy monitoring support and maintaining systematic and up-to-date country database on related policies and programmes.
- Greater proactivity of the FAO Representative in technical interaction with international/national development partners. Focus should be on developing national strategies and policies that give particular attention to the rural-urban interface, inclusive of consumer rights to safe and nutritious food, and being forward looking in such areas as environmental threats and climate change mitigation, consistent with FAO's own strategic framework and Medium Term Plan and that of other development partners.
- Undertaking further methodological and capacity development at headquarters and regional office in the area of policy cycle monitoring and evaluation, including preparation of technical guidelines for adaptation and communication/outreach to countries.
- Strengthening FAO's in-house capacity and institutional arrangements for policy assistance in regional offices and headquarters (including technical divisions) for better country specialisation and focus. This entails identifying country-specific focal points in various technical divisions/units.
- A critical re-examination of operational procedures and modalities for inter-departmental work on policy support, including the working of the Headquarter Policy Task Force and other relevant cross-departmental mechanisms will also be necessary to permit better policy and technical subject matter inter-face at various levels of the organisation.

Annex IV

Burundi – Defining a Rural Credit Policy by Frédéric Dévé¹

1. Policy context

Until the 1993 socio-political crisis and 12-year civil war, Burundi's rural and agricultural credit system and policy exhibited many of the "conventional" features of agricultural and rural credit practices in place in Africa at that time. These credit practices were centered on a National Development Bank; a dense network of rural savings and credit cooperatives; formal commercial bank services for agricultural and agri-business production units with entrepreneurship capacity; credit in kind (e.g. for inputs or seeds) from boards ("offices") in charge of export commodities for small producers; and traditional informal credit practices.

During the conflict, most of the systems collapsed or all but collapsed. The major financial institutions targeting rural areas continued to exist, but their activities were severely contracted. The export boards also suffered from disruptions in input supply and international trade circuits, while production was dramatically reduced.

In 2000-2001, the transitory government felt the need for assistance to improve agricultural and rural credit as well as microfinance. Both were seen as potentially contributing to the revitalization and reconstruction of the economy in general and of the agricultural sector in particular. A request for assistance was addressed to FAO. FAO's policy assistance was provided in the framework of the Technical Cooperation Programme (TCP) project "*Définition d'une politique de crédit rural*" during 2000-2001.

During the project period, a World Bank (WB) interim reconstruction strategy was being implemented. The Government of Burundi was giving high priority to microfinance. This resulted in microfinance receiving more attention compared to rural credit in the agenda of Burundi's policy makers and may have delayed the effective policy action that was needed in the area of rural and agricultural finance. FAO had identified a number of essential prerequisites as necessary for any sustainable development of rural credit activities. These prerequisites are now in place, but the flows of rural and productive agricultural credit have remained "ridiculous," as the Ministry of Agriculture states in its 2006 Sectoral Policy.

During the project period, the two prominent players for rural and agricultural credit in Burundi were the *Banque nationale de développement économique* (created by the government in 1966 as the National Development Bank) and the *Coopératives d'épargne et de crédit*. The latter, and their national federation did (and continue to) represent the major decentralized financial system ("*système financier décentralisé*" - SFD) or microfinance institution ("*Institution de Microfinance*" - IMF) network in Burundi.

A number of microfinance operators – often but not always linked to reconstruction projects funded by multilateral or bilateral agencies – were launching new credit activities in the context of the Arusha negotiations for peace. The profile and philosophy of these activities were often inspired by the microfinance approach resulting from the Grameen Bank experience.

By 2000, Burundi's social instability, residual conflicts and mistrust were still affecting credit practices and inducing SFDs to limit their credit services to agriculture, while developing them in other activities (small trade in particular). In addition, the development of microcredit activity was facing a number of serious handicaps: absence of common regulation and a legal and prudential framework (that would have protected client deposits and imposed management and performance norms); and low institutional and individual staff professional capacity aggravated by the "brain drain".

¹ By Frédéric Dévé, FAO Consultant, based on Dévé, F., Lesson learning in policy assistance: Burundi Case study – "*Définition d'une politique de crédit rural*", October 2006.

2. FAO and the policy assistance process

The ultimate objective of the assistance was to formulate an agricultural and rural credit policy, and a strategy and action plan to implement it. The expected result was a “document containing the required detailed elements for the formulation of a policy concerning the development of financial services in rural areas”. These elements were expected to include relevant components and policy instruments, and their implementation process and control mechanisms. Project operations included three phases:

- A review of the situation, the preparation of terms of reference for national consultants and their recruitment, and the selection of countries where study tours were to be organized.
- Analysis and study tours by national consultants, and three provincial seminars were to be organized.
- Preparation of documents – background and reference reports – for a national roundtable concluding the project’s field activities.

The process had an inherent capacity-building function, which resulted in the following:

- Exposure of key national consultants to rural credit experiences in foreign countries. Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Mali and Senegal were visited and their experience analysed, with lessons drawn based on comparisons with the Burundi situation. The final roundtable did allow for a substantial international exchange of ideas and experiences.
- Experience of a bottom-up policy dialogue and process. Three regional seminars with local stakeholders were organized in Bujumbura, Gitega and Ngoz to discuss credit policy issues and formulate recommendations.
- These seminars, the selection process of national consultants and their contributions to the debate, the various consultations undertaken by the international consultant with national stakeholders, donors and decision makers, culminated in the project’s final roundtable. In the latter, key actors of the financial and credit system were invited to make presentations and share their views with all other participants, who included key donors. This procedure exposed stakeholders to a participatory policy analysis and process.

The approach chosen by FAO was to promote a bottom–up process that led to the formulation of a transitory policy by the Government of Burundi itself (rather than substituting for the government and having the policy drafted by FAO experts). This can be viewed in part as FAO’s “philosophy” and “line of action” regarding ownership of policy initiatives, capacity building and policy assistance in general. However, this line also prevented FAO from adopting a sufficiently “proactive” attitude, in circumstances where rapid action was needed. Since national institutional capacity was weak in Burundi, consideration should have been given to substituting government staff in critical situations where action was deemed necessary in order to achieve more rapid results.

It is worth noting that while the project was being implemented, WB was conducting a study and the African Development Bank was working in the same area. Very limited interaction took place between FAO and these two initiatives. Thus, separate reports and recommendations were submitted almost at the same time to the Council of Ministers, which claimed that better coordination should have occurred.

The process also made it clear that the Ministry of Finance and Central Bank should be formally and actively involved as counterpart institutions for similar exercises.

3. Expertise mobilized by the policy assistance process

In terms of expertise mobilized in the project, one shortcoming was that it did not include specific technical assistance for the design of a legal and prudential framework. The international consultant was a lawyer, with broad international experience in this field, but his terms of reference did not envisage the provision of support for drafting a legal and prudential framework. This suggests that in many occurrences, within FAO it may be desirable to associate the Legal Service of FAO as a member of the group of that is providing particular policy assistance.

Moreover, FAO could have mobilized the expertise at country level to convene fora and meetings and to facilitate the national policy dialogue in an effective manner. This potential was repeatedly used at the level of the FAO Representative and by experts for several activities.

4. FAO's policy assistance management

The expertise potential could be tapped in a more systematic and proactive manner by strengthening the role of country offices in the technical management of policy assistance projects. To this end, the mandate, resources and competences of FAO representations should be re-visited.

The request of assistance for this Technical Cooperation Programme (TCP) project came from the Ministry of Agriculture. However, FAO should have supported and guided the Ministry in establishing the required level of dialogue with other ministries such as Finance, Education and Health. For example, through sensitization, advocacy, and coalition building, it could have helped convince the Ministry of Finance to increase the resources allocated to agriculture development, as stated in regional/international declarations (e.g. Maputo Declaration for Africa).

In Burundi, there is considerable a lack of access to documentation, including existing FAO training, information and extension material. For example, FAO's on-line training and publications on rural credit are not well disseminated in the country. Promises were made during the concluding roundtable that FAO literature (e.g. publications on *Best practices*) would be distributed, but six years later this has not occurred. The FAO Micro-banking software was also recommended during the roundtable, but this software has still not been disseminated. This is regrettable as it limits the usefulness of the materials and tools developed by FAO. It appears that the role of widespread and systematic dissemination should be played by the FAO country office.

5. Lessons learned

Some of the major lessons learned are as follows:

- Policy processes take time before they result in action. A time lag of one to two years was necessary before preliminary adoption of several recommendations took place. Six years elapsed before the most crucial recommendations were adopted (legal and prudential framework).
- In a post-conflict situation, decision makers may be more concerned about reconstruction, demobilization, national reconciliation and macroeconomic stabilization than about sectoral policies. In the absence of a clear economic policy framework, issues risk being addressed in an *ad-hoc* fashion at sector level.
- Dialogue with other partners in the international community must be considered seriously and at an early stage as it can influence many national policy choices. Most international financial institutions (IFIs) and major donors have become very influential on government policies through the leverage of conditionality. This places FAO in a special and recognized position of "impartial" and "honest" facilitator, "experienced and competent" adviser. However, this position is often insufficiently influential to quickly generate outcomes and impact. For this reason, FAO can be precursor, pioneer and catalyst among other aid agencies, but considerable delays may occur before the advice actually leads to policy change. Enhancing policy dialogue with IFIs and other UN agencies is indispensable to making FAO's policy advice more effective and preventing conflicting views from reaching decision makers at the same time.
- Some possible approaches to better fine-tune FAO's policy assistance to exogenous factors, and to enhance the chances of recommendations being implemented, include:
 - Stronger relationships and collaboration between FAO and Ministries of Finance and Central Banks (which could even become institutional counterparts), so as to ensure advocacy and effective policy dialogue on critical issues.
 - Actual drafting of policy documents and design of sub-sectoral policies when necessary, in cases of extremely weak institutional capacity (as found in post-conflict contexts); outputs can then be submitted to the government for consideration.
 - Extending the assistance until bottlenecks for policy reform are resolved, such as the creation of a legal and prudential framework in the case of Burundi.
 - Enhancing the capacity of FAO technical units and FAO Representatives to monitor the adoption of policy recommendations over a period of time after a policy project has concluded.

Annex V

Cambodia – Capacity Building of Professional Agricultural Organizations and Local Rural Development Institutions/Assessment and Localization of the Millennium Development Goal on Reducing Poverty and Hunger

by Lokendra P. Poudyal¹

1. Policy context

After the Khmer Rouge takeover in April 1975, Cambodia suffered almost two decades of war, which ended in 1993 with the promulgation of a new Constitution and elections under the auspices of the United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia in the same year. Another independent election was held in July 1998, and the new government established as a priority the creation and mobilization of professional agricultural organizations in its efforts to formulate suitable agricultural and rural development policies.

Agreeing to this concept, FAO supported the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (MAFF) and the Ministry of Rural Development (MRD) with the project Preparation of Capacity Building Programmes for Professional Agricultural Organizations and Local Rural Development Institutions (TCP/CMB/8822). (Prior to this project, FAO had supported MAFF through another project, which focused on the restructuring of MAFF's central and provincial structures.) Another project in which FAO has been assisting Cambodia in its policy formulation and implementation process in the area of agriculture and food security is the Assessment and Localization of the Millennium Development Goal on Reducing Poverty and Hunger (CMB/02/016/08/12). This project was executed under the financial support of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and provided technical assistance for designing policies and targets for localizing Millennium Development Goal (MDG) 1 (reduction of poverty and hunger). These two projects form the basis of this case study.

The country was emphasizing market economy orientation for increased food production and food security. In this regard, mobilization of professional agriculture organization was felt essential to contribute to increasing the productivity and rural income of farmers. Similarly, the mobilization of Village Development Committees was expected to maximize local potential. These considerations were significant in the context of sustainable food security. Realizing the fact that the farmers require improved access to production services, MAFF attempted to obtain support from various agencies and emphasized preparation of implementation by strengthening capacity of the farmer organizations.

Previously, FAO had provided technical support for the preparation of the Food Security and Poverty Alleviation Project (FSPAP 2000-2005) and the Second Socio-Economic Development Plan (SEDP II). Within FSPAP, FAO's assistance focused on the formulation of an agriculture policy and strategy that would help improve food security. Regarding the preparation of SEDP II, FAO's focus was on preparing the agriculture and rural development chapter. These supports were consistent with the Rome Declaration and World Food Summit 1996 and re-affirmed the government's commitment made in the World Food Summit 2002. All of these factors indicate the key role of the agriculture and rural development sectors as a contributor to the reduction of poverty and hunger. The implementation of CMB/02/016/08/12 project was one of the efforts falling into the preceding frameworks.

2. FAO and the policy assistance process

The government and FAO have prepared a joint National Medium Term Programme Framework (2006-2010) document, which elaborates the structure of possible FAO support to Cambodia. This document is useful for both FAO and the government in developing their respective plans coherently. This document aligns with the priorities outlined in the National Strategic Development Plan and the UN Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF).

¹ By **Dr. Lokendra Prasad Poudyal**, FAO Consultant, based on **Poudyal, L.P.**, Lesson learning in policy assistance: Cambodia Case studies – "Capacity Building Programmes for Professional Agricultural Organizations and Local Rural Development Institutions" and "*Préparation de programmes de renforcement des organisations professionnelles agricoles de des institutions de développement rural*", FAO, March 2007.

Both projects were implemented through a series of dialogues between the government and FAO. To facilitate implementation, the government formed technical committees comprised of key stakeholders. The committees helped to develop an environment for the adoption of recommended policies. They were also useful in ensuring national ownership of the process and maintaining inter-ministerial cooperation. For example, FAO has tried to work closely with the Advisory Committee on the MDGs. This committee was provided with information on the methods, adoption criteria and targets. Feedback was obtained and suggestions were integrated to improve results.

FAO emphasized broader participation of people at all levels and had tried to use already established rural development committees at different levels, hoping that their mobilization would conform to the ongoing decentralization process.

Realizing that government ownership of recommended policies helps minimize the delay in their adoption, FAO attempted to integrate its policy assistance process with the need- and priority-based proposals put forward by the government, to the extent that these proposals were relevant to FAO's mandate. Most of the recommendations emerged within the short span of the project duration. However, they proved difficult for the government to absorb, since it did not have adequate technical capacity and budget. Therefore, there may be a need for follow-up activities until the policy recommendations are fully implemented.

The long list of policy recommendations generated by the two projects was not conducive to helping the government establish priorities. In turn, the chances of the recommendations being adopted were decreased, given the limited resources and capacities in the country. The government does not perceive the recommendations as part of a coherent policy but rather as a "patchwork" that does not fit well within the bigger picture of national needs and priorities. This ultimately minimized the hope for post-project implementation of the recommendations. In fact, most of the policy recommendations are somewhere in between "partially" adopted and "not totally rejected", and the adoption process has generally taken much longer than expected due to the government's limited technical and budgetary capacity and the lack of coordination among stakeholders. Overlapping mandate of the ministries with regard to the issues related to agricultural and rural development was another problem.

As often as possible, throughout the project FAO helped coordinate and define roles and functions of the different ministries and other stakeholders for the planning and implementation of activities to avoid overlaps, duplications and gaps.

Since the end of these two projects, FAO has been trying to arrange some follow-up activities by attempting to mobilize funding from donor countries. However, it has met with limited success, in part due to the recent preference of donors for supporting co-financed projects, which has made the follow-up process more complex and the mobilization of funds more difficult. Moreover, all professional agricultural organizations established to date operate independently. They do not have any federation or union to voice their collective agenda at the higher level. The problems faced by these organizations include:

- Limited knowledge, skills and experience among the members and leaders.
- Limited funds for involvement in greater business.
- Lack of adequate infrastructure for the office.
- Lack of farmers' capacity to purchase more shares, which could form a working capital.
- Small number of establishments to attract government's attention.

This shows that overall the process by which the assistance was provided had not been adequately designed as it led to important shortcomings.

3. Expertise mobilized by the policy assistance process

The government considers FAO as a credible working partner on the issues related to food production, food security and institutional development. The government appreciated the joint consultations that FAO initiated and admired its imposition-free working style in suggesting policy recommendations.

In the two projects analysed here, FAO provided technical support through national and international experts whose qualifications, competences and experiences were well appreciated by the government. For the first project, the team was comprised of:

- Two international consultants (Institutions Specialist and Professional Agriculture Organization Specialist).
- Two senior (already retired) experts (Professional Agriculture Organization Specialist and Specialist for Needs Analysis and Training Programme Planning).
- Five national consultants (Institutions Specialist, Rural Socio-economist, Professional Agriculture Organization Specialist, Data Management Specialist and Training Specialist).

The second project included the support of:

- Three international consultants (Policy Officer/Team Leader, Agricultural Policy Specialist and Rural Development Policy Specialist and Monitoring and Evaluation Specialist).
- One national staff (Policy and Programme).
- FAO mission, which also provided inputs.

Necessary guidance was provided by organizing occasional backstopping missions from the responsible FAO technical unit. Government staff were fully satisfied with the quality of services offered by these technical experts. In particular, they observed the use of relevant cross-country experiences as quite useful in shaping policy recommendations consistent with domestic needs and priorities. At the same time, the staffing capacity at the FAO country office was small if compared to the number of incoming advisory requests from the government. Some technical staff should be added to this office to improve its catalytic strength.

The policy assistance activities were launched according to the project schedule, which had positive impact on the sequencing and credibility of FAO's management. Although FAO played a significant role in the policy reform process, its contribution was not fully acknowledged; in particular, for the project on professional agricultural organizations and rural development institutions. This project covered a subject that many other donor-supported projects had implemented. However, FAO's role was fully acknowledged with respect to the project on localizing MDG 1.

4. Lessons learned

FAO's support was useful for the government to address some of its priority issues such as the establishment and mobilization of local organizations for effective service delivery at the decentralized level. However, the adoption status of some policy recommendations was not encouraging: after six years, many have still not been adopted. In this regard, the establishment of a monitoring system would not only help to control deviations but would also contribute to accommodating emerging changes as they become relevant to the context of recommended policies.

Experience indicates that there is no quick-fix approach to policy change. The time needed for the process of translating policy recommendations into action might take five years, and even more. This implies that the policy assistance process should have its span over a longer period of time than what can be envisaged under an individual Technical Cooperation Project.

The involvement of a particular technical unit in a country is determined by the existence of a project. Once the project is over, the working relationship between the country, the FAO country office and the technical unit (s) ceases to exist. This situation is a serious constraint to carrying through the adoption of recommendations formulated during the implementation phase. In order to maintain momentum, follow-up arrangements are needed to cater to the needs of post-project consultations.

The FAO Representative's personal rapport with the government staff is an essential ingredient for discussing emerging issues with government and also in facilitating the adoption process. Some government staff noted that successive FAO Representatives can have various degrees of involvement. This indicates the need to encourage and strengthen FAO Representatives' catalytic role in the policy assistance process.

The policy recommendations were primarily based on the technical analysis of the reforms desired. However, they often failed to examine the operational ground realities in terms of their relevance to the context, availability of funds and technical competence of the government staff. Analysis of these aspects is important for successful implementation, and the policy recommendation process should not ignore them.

Annex VI

Libya – National Seed Program – Preparatory Assistance by Mouldi Zouaoui¹

1. Policy Context

The total arable land in Libya is about 2 170 000 hectares, of which 355 000 hectares are devoted to permanent crops. Agricultural activities are generally limited to the Mediterranean coastal strip and the low mountainous land, as well as in scattered oases in the desert.

The bulk of agricultural production comes from the privately owned farms. Government farms, mainly under irrigation in the desert, produce cereals and forage on about 50 000 hectares.

Libya is well aware of the role that efficient agriculture can play in achieving food security, reducing the dramatic foreign exchange cost of imports and improving social welfare. National decision makers are also convinced that there are two main sources that can bring about the needed increase in food and agricultural production: (i) the remarkable increase in water supply brought to arable land by the “Great Man-made River” (GMR) project; and (ii) by cultivating more land and increasing agricultural productivity. An increase in agriculture-sector performance will need to be accompanied by an improved technological package and optimum use of inputs, mainly improved seeds.

In recognition of the role improved seeds can play, the government has made a number of efforts over the past decades to build a national seed programme. Although these efforts have had some impact, the seed programme showed many weaknesses at the time the FAO project was initiated and was considered inadequate to constitute a credible basis in the national drive towards a modern and vibrant agriculture. Weaknesses included:

- Lack of appropriate equipment for seed production and processing.
- Absence of a credible seed enterprise charged with production, processing and distribution.
- Lack of seed legislation, certification and crop variety catalogues.
- Lack of a national seed strategy and coordinating body charged with preparing a national seed policy and plan and coordinating activities (including exports and imports).

In order to address these problems, in May 1999 the Government of the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya requested FAO’s technical assistance, which was provided under the Technical Cooperation Project (TCP) “National Seed Programme – Preparatory Assistance” (TCP/LIB/8921).

The project outputs were meant to pave the way for the planned five-year Unilateral Trust Fund seed project, which was to provide assistance to develop a National Seed Programme by initiating preliminary actions on seed policy, setting up infrastructure for germplasm information management, creating country-wide awareness on seed, preparing the foundation for a massive seed propagation programme, and ensuring sustainability of systematic seed multiplication activities and quality control procedures.

At the time of the project, Libya had been under US sanctions since 1986, barring the country from having access to US technologies and financial services. In 1992, an embargo was imposed by the United Nations, which virtually isolated the country by drastically limiting its economic, financial and cultural relations with rest of the world. The national context was therefore characterized by political difficulties (embargo), budget restrictions (low oil prices) and scarcity of experienced technicians and policy analysts. This complicated the work of the FAO team. (The embargo was finally lifted on October 2004 and US sanctions were lifted gradually to reach normal relations in 2006.)

When the project started, FAO was the single foreign partner cooperating with the government in the development of the agricultural sector. Under such conditions it is important to consider the real

¹ By **Mouldi Zouaoui**, FAO Consultant, based on **Zouaoui, M.**, Libya Case Study “National Seed Programme Preparatory Assistance” (TCP/LIB/8921), FAO Rome, October 2006.

motivations of the Ministry of Agriculture's request for policy assistance. Was it really to build a comprehensive seed project? Or was it to find a way out of the difficulties of an exceptional situation? This doubt on whether there was a real political will to undertake deep reforms in the seed sub-sector may explain the difficulties met in implementing some of the recommendations that the project made.

2. FAO and the Policy Assistance Process

The main counterpart of the project was the Ministry of Agriculture, which was institutionally weak and facing serious resource constraints. After 2001, its responsibilities were reduced progressively and the ministry was downgraded to a simple production service in 2002. In fact, the real decision makers for the agriculture sector were the Ministry of Finance and the State Bank, which focus on strategic and long term issues. Seed policy was not among their priorities, and they were not involved in the project, thus hindering the implementation of some of the recommendations made, especially those with financial and long-term implications.

The project was certainly hampered by the lack of an FAO Country Office in Libya with an FAO Representative who could establish the appropriate conditions for dialogue with these two key decision makers. A lack of other important stakeholders also compromised the visibility and relevance of agricultural considerations within the policy debate. This made it difficult for FAO to fully understand the national context.

Timeliness was also an issue since it took roughly one year for FAO to respond to the policy assistance request. Combined with the change of ministers, these factors could explain the low level of awareness and attention paid to agricultural concerns, and seed in particular.

Lack of communication created some difficulties during the project. Project documents were very poorly disseminated, to the extent that the reports formulating the recommendations were not known even by some members of the FAO team involved in the project. This may be due in part to the very strong oral tradition in the country, and the fact that people are not inclined to reading, especially when documents are in English. More could have been achieved if there had been follow-up activities planned. But this did not occur because of the absence of a Country Representative and the lack of resources (human and financial), which had not been anticipated for this purpose in the policy assistance project.

3. Expertise mobilized by the policy assistance process

Before the project, there had been no dialogue among private- and public- seed sector organizations and the Ministry of Agriculture. The project initiated and facilitated dialogue among stakeholders by organizing a two-day forum. The project team and 50 participants drawn from all relevant actors (farmers, seed importers, seed growers, extension, research, Ministry of Agriculture, agricultural projects and the University of Tripoli) participated in the forum. The project team succeeded in gathering this broad array of stakeholders to formulate policy proposals and build a consensus on recommendations (eight recommendations were made and four were approved and fully implemented).

In addition to policy advice, the project included some capacity-building activities. This aspect of FAO's intervention was well appreciated in the country and helped to build trust and contributed to the implementation of recommendations.

Altogether, six experts were involved in this project. The International Seed Industry Consultant was appointed Team Leader. The team included only experts with technical skills. Given the country's limited human and financial resources and the complexity of the project (which is not only a technical project but has legal, political and communication aspects), the project should have included provision for a legal specialist to support the drafting of legal texts (National Seed Policy and/or a Seed Law) and a facilitator for ensuring close follow-up until the implementation of the recommendations.

Combining involvement of national consultants with international consultants was very productive and improved the policy process because experienced staff living and working in the country helped to

build trust, mutual confidence and understanding. It should also contribute in the future to ensure continuity of dialogue and flow of information, particularly with external partners.

The non-adoption of some recommendations made can also be explained by the lack of coordination between organizations responsible for coordination (Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Planning and State Bank) and the Ministry of Agriculture. In addition, more attention paid by FAO to programmes of other agencies in the country could have helped to build consensus and facilitated the implementation and funding of project follow-up activities.

4. FAO's policy assistance management

The lack of follow-up was certainly the main reason for which some crucial recommendations were not implemented. Follow up is an essential condition for effectiveness of the policy assistance provided.

The nature of the TCP, which has limited scope, resources and flexibility, has constituted a clear constraint in Libya since the country was facing very specific and unique conditions (immediate aftermath of a long embargo, a significant cultural and economic gap with the rest of the world, marginalized role and place of agriculture in the national economy, etc.) that would have required a higher degree of adaptation to local condition and more flexible rules.

5. Lessons learned

The project demonstrated that providing policy assistance is a complex activity. Such assistance works with people – trying to change their mentality – and with institutions – seeking to influence their policy and regulations. Its effectiveness depends on a variety of factors, in particular the technical qualities and experience of the team experts providing the assistance, as well as their competence, knowledge of the country (culture, tradition, etc.), modesty, flexibility and receptiveness.

Other lessons learned from the project are as follows:

- In order to minimize risk of ineffectiveness of policy assistance, it is important to deeply analyse the request for assistance before starting a particular activity, to make sure that there is a genuine demand for policy assistance, and that it is clearly formulated regarding its purpose and objectives.
- A proper dialogue between the FAO team and key decision makers in the country and in other organizations providing technical assistance would have eased the implementation of the recommendations and contributed to raise the visibility of agricultural concerns in the mind of key decision makers, while at the same time ensuring that recommendations formulated by FAO are in line with macroeconomic considerations.
- It is critical to have an effective communication strategy which is well targeted and adopts a style that responds to the culture and educational level of the target audience.
- It is in the nature of TCPs to be short and quick. However in special situations (war, embargo, and weakness of human and financial means) there should be some provision for more flexibility and latitude to the experts to adapt the project to the process in the country and to an evolving environment so as to increase effectiveness.

Annex VII

Morocco – Support to the General Agricultural Development Council by Brahim Amouri¹

1. Policy context

Morocco has been rolling out a major programme of economic reforms since the early 1980s in its effort to liberalize the economy and forge a new political and economic direction. In 1995, the country joined the World Trade Organization, which made it imperative for the national economy to adapt to the international environment and meet the challenges of a competitive market. In 1996, it signed a new Association Agreement with the European Union for a free trade area to be set up in 2010. This new economic and institutional reality has called for a greater diversity and promotion of civil society actors, and for a new relationship between the public and private sectors.

It is against this background that the Ministry of Agriculture, Rural Development and Marine Fisheries felt a strong need to more effectively set the agenda for an agricultural development policy and programmes. The General Council for Agricultural Development (*Conseil Général du Développement Agricole*, CGDA) was set up in 1993 as a result of the restructuring of the Ministry, in order to enable it to play this role by providing an appropriate forum for the exchange of information, consultation, collaboration and partnership between the actors involved, and to enable them to set up and implement agricultural policies. For the CGDA to be able to carry out these tasks, it needed to build up its analytical capabilities and its capacity to formulate proposals, as well as to adapt its organizational structure and methods to meet the demands generated by the new kind of relationship between the public and private sectors. It also needed to equip itself with high-performance tools and systems to promote consultation, collaboration and information exchange among the different economic operators, and to train its human resources and those of other partners so as to broaden participation.

With these aims in mind, the Minister for Agriculture wanted the CGDA to benefit from FAO's experience and the expertise it has gained helping agricultural institutions adapt to new national and international realities. In addition, the government requested FAO's assistance in light of the excellent relationship and fruitful cooperation maintained over several decades.

2. FAO and the policy assistance process

The Minister for Agriculture and the President of the CGDA contacted the FAO Representative in Morocco directly, in order to explore the possibility of the CGDA receiving assistance from FAO to help it take its institutional plans forward. The Representative contacted the Rural Institutions and Participation Service (SDAR) of FAO for help with the technical aspects, as SDAR was already involved in institution-building activities in the agricultural sector in Morocco through several Technical Cooperation Programme (TCP) and Unilateral Trust Funds (UTF) projects. The Director of the Rural Development Division (SDA) personally followed the work leading to the finalization of the assistance project, and secured the support of all the relevant FAO units. The outcome of these efforts was the preparation of the TCP/MOR/8926 project document, "Supporting the General Council for Agricultural Development", which is the subject of this case study.

The parties opted for a participatory approach from the outset. Annual meetings/seminars were organized to discuss the issues and policies that needed to be covered by the project, as well as to define priorities and ensure that all actors were up to standard in their areas of responsibility.

The participation of SDAR and then of FAO's Policy Assistance Division (TCA) Director himself proved very helpful in facilitating the assistance process. Their attendance every year at the CGDA meetings meant that they could regularly meet all the participants, including the Minister, and that the timing and required profiles of expertise for the assistance could be decided together. The FAO Country Office

¹ By **Brahim Amouri**, FAO Consultant, based on **Amouri, B.**, "*Projet TCP/MOR/8926 Appui au Conseil Général du Développement Agricole*", October 2006 (translated from French by I. Waterstone).

played a vital role, and with the help of TCA and SDAR succeeded in creating a strong sense of teamwork among the FAO units.

The recommendations were drawn up systematically and within the timelines set out in the work plan established for the project, and there were no delays in the implementation planning stage. All stakeholders participated in the process. The proposal to prioritize capacity building and training first, by dedicating the second institutional seminar of the CGDA to these, was very wise. It meant that there could be a response to a need that all partners considered essential.

Formulating the recommendations was slow, labour-intensive and participatory. The system of allocating particular topics or themes to individual task forces encouraged a multi-disciplinary approach and helped participants acquire a feeling of ownership of the recommendations. Meetings were held with stakeholders to discuss the content and their participation in putting the recommendations into practice. The dialogue between the CGDA and the other actors was facilitated by the fact that the new President had also been Secretary General of the Ministry. His sense of tact and the respect in which he is held helped to largely avoid conflicts of authority and responsibilities arising between the various partners.

Several members of the CGDA council visited FAO headquarters to familiarize themselves with the methods and procedures for preparing FAO's State of Food and Agriculture (SOFA) and for setting up and maintaining FAO's World Agricultural Information Centre (WAICENT). These missions received institutional support from FAO, through its services and staff responsible for these areas. The dialogue established between the FAO teams and the visiting groups of CGDA council members proved to be effective and mutually rewarding.

3. Expertise mobilized by the policy assistance process

The expertise provided was of a very high level, and good use was made of it through the involvement of senior CGDA personnel (including its president) and the use of mixed teams of national and international consultants. Moreover, in certain areas covered by the project, the CGDA was able to benefit from FAO's experience directly through the staff members in charge of these areas.

The use of international experts as well as national consultants proved to be highly effective in terms of the efficiency of the assistance provided, the quality of input, and efficiency of cost. The national experts were carefully chosen and often came with well-established reputations in their fields of specialization and thus brought their knowledge of the sector and of the decision-making channels in the country. The involvement of senior FAO technical staff (whether in service or retired) as consultants meant that the CGDA experts were able to develop a direct relationship with them, which in turn helped to form the basis for an ongoing, long-term cooperation between the relevant FAO units and the CGDA. (It should be noted here that the majority of the consultants had a reasonably good knowledge of the situation and conditions in Morocco.)

4. FAO's policy assistance management

The project supports and reinforces the efforts undertaken by Morocco of institution building in the Ministry of Agriculture, the cooperative sectors and the chambers of agriculture. FAO had the experience and the expertise in these fields, in addition to in-depth knowledge of conditions in the country. It was therefore clear which divisions needed to become involved in the project.

SDAR was appointed as Lead Technical Unit for the implementation of the project. Other units contributed to this work, in particular TCA. The FAO Representation in Rabat was very actively involved, along with FAO's relevant regional and subregional offices, in a demonstration of well-coordinated teamwork.

On the Moroccan side, the Ministry of Agriculture was in charge of delivering the project, which it tasked to the CGDA. The Minister also proceeded to appoint Engineers and Chief Engineers as members of the CGDA council, and to allocate its financial resources.

The significant support given to the CGDA as part of the project stems from the fact that FAO firmly believes that the CGDA can play an important role in agricultural development in Morocco by carrying out the missions it is tasked with. The support is provided in a coordinated manner by several FAO divisions, often through their own staff members, and is tailored to meet the needs of the CGDA as identified by the latter in agreement with FAO. With respect to FAO headquarters, the Director of TCA acts as the direct contact for the CGDA President and the FAO Representative and is responsible for follow-up on the assistance requested; he also participates in the annual institutional seminars of the CGDA. The Representation has played a fundamental role, especially as it is equally convinced of the importance of the CGDA's role in agricultural policy.

5. Lessons learned

Six key recommendations came out of the project, one of which could not be evaluated in this case study, because of insufficient information. Of the remaining five, only one has not yet been implemented, despite the sustained efforts of the CGDA to give it practical substance. The project also had an indirect and very positive impact on the national debate on agricultural policy.

The assistance provided was effective, efficient and of high quality, and both the government and FAO were pleased with the outcome. Work on the project was helped by some very favourable conditions:

- The request for assistance was clear and detailed, and formulated in response to concrete priority needs.
- The new government under the system of political alternation supported the request for assistance, which had been formulated in response to needs identified by the Minister for Agriculture of the preceding government.
- FAO was already engaged in similar institution-building work and the project was thus able to benefit from the experience acquired.
- There is a substantial and sustained dialogue on agricultural policy between the FAO Representative and the Ministry of Agriculture.
- The government values FAO's expertise, and relations between the government and FAO are excellent. The same applies to the cooperation and contacts between high-level personnel of both parties.

These conditions helped FAO adopt an appropriate approach for carrying out the project, one which could properly take into account outside factors potentially affecting the assistance process and the formulation of the recommendations.

However, as noted above, one of the six key recommendations of the project was not adopted. The reason for this is that it was based solely on an analysis of the technical aspects, without taking into account the budgetary implications, the complexity of the organizational and institutional structures involved, and the conflicts of authority and overlapping of responsibilities of the actors concerned. Taking such factors into account is essential, which is why all the participants need to be involved at every stage of the process of formulating recommendations.

Cooperation between the CGDA and FAO, particularly with TCA, continued well beyond the end of the project. This cooperation took a number of forms and covered a number of areas, developing the foundation of an intellectual partnership, which is one of the recommendations of the project. Cooperation includes: the regular participation of the Director of TCA in the annual institutional seminars of the CGDA; FAO support to the CGDA during the negotiations on the free trade area with the United States; and the assistance project currently being prepared for FAO to participate in carrying out the CGDA's current programme of studies. Both parties are working to develop this partnership further by maintaining ongoing dialogue and focusing on agricultural policy issues of interest to both.

Annex VIII

Poland – Polish Rapeseed Sector Review

by Jurek Michalek¹

1. Policy context

In 2001-2002, economic growth in Poland had slowed down considerably. As a result of newly introduced (trade distortionary) policy instruments, some oilseed crushers claimed to be facing negative protection (i.e. effective taxation) leading to a significant drop in the profitability of the edible oil industry.² Crushers felt especially disadvantaged because of decreasing world market prices for export of rapeseed meal, a general economic slowdown and reforms directed towards more free trade in Poland, in particular through the implementation of the Central European Free Trade Agreements (CEFTA). Their economic situation deteriorated when tariffs for certain oil products were reduced in January 2001 and some limited exports of rapeseed were granted subsidies.³

The major policy issue from their perspective was to launch action aiming at changing these policies and ensuring that the crushing industry in Poland became profitable again.⁴ At the same time other agri-food sectors in Poland were in similar or even worse economic situations (i.e. subject to much more distortionary policies). However, the lack of adequate mechanisms for making comparisons and setting up relevant priorities for FAO policy assistance in Poland resulted in this particular request for assistance being accepted by FAO, although the request did not come from the policy makers' side and was not officially requested by the government.

The European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) was concerned with improving the economic condition of some of its customers, and in particular with one of the major crushing plants to which it had given a large loan. By supporting this project with a relatively small grant, EBRD sought to create an opportunity to: i) undertake the review of the rapeseed sector in Poland; ii) contribute to further modernizing the food industry through continued equity investments; and iii) discontinue some of the most distortionary agricultural/trade policies, such as export subsidies, by presenting to the Polish government their adverse effects on the entire edible oil processing sector.

The policy assistance was provided by the FAO Investment Centre, a division of FAO which is designed to cooperate with financial institutions (World Bank, the International Fund for Agricultural Development and regional banks such as the EBRD in particular). The FAO Investment Centre is partly funded by FAO, and partly funded by partner financial institutions.

2. FAO and the policy assistance process

Following the EBRD, the FAO Investment Centre undertook to conduct a policy assistance activity in the rape seed sector in Poland under the EBRD/FAO Cooperation Programme. The request and project were treated in a standardized manner, along the lines of the 55 similar projects that FAO had implemented in Eastern Europe under the above programme between 1996 and 2006. Project objectives stated that the FAO assistance was to be issue-neutral and expected to take into account the interests of both major stakeholders (i.e. crushers and rapeseed producers).⁵ Since there were no

¹ By **J. Michalek**, University of Kiel, Germany based on **Michalek, J.** Poland Case Studies: "Rapeseed Sector Review" (COOP/POL/P /108030 COOP/POL/P/098310), FAO Rome, 2006.

² This opinion was not shared by all edible oil processors, especially by those who imported at this time cheap oil and processed it to other products. Their profitability was at that time rather high.

³ Interestingly, although none of the proposals made by the FAO project report had been adopted, the economic situation of crushers improved dramatically over the 2003-2005 period. This positive development discouraged the crushing industry from entering into any official co-operation with the Union of rapeseed producers although such dialogue was seen at the time the project as an important step towards improvement of the situation in the rapeseed sector (see: FAO report).

⁴ EBRD and Kruszwica Company were the most active to request the project.

⁵ It is unclear why interests of those important stakeholders were granted more attention than that of others such as consumers and taxpayers, given that a potential agreement between two former interest groups would have a negative impact on the latter through an increase of consumer prices.

other projects on the edible oil sector in Poland at the time, FAO considered the policy assistance to be “fully justified”.

According to the project Terms of Reference, the FAO assistance was expected to be implemented within several days. The mission of two international consultants was supposed to last no longer than two weeks and the project report (including recommendations) was to be delivered “no later than two weeks after the experts’ return from Poland”. Furthermore, the project Terms of Reference stated that the report was to be commented on by both FAO and EBRD, which would create an analytical bias in favour of EBRD’s interests, since it had funded one of the stakeholders – the crushers.

As the project had not been officially requested by the government, there was no project terminal statement and no official submission of project report/recommendations to the government. In fact, the original request for this project came from a party which by any terms could not be assessed as issue neutral, i.e. one of the crushing plants. Many of the people interviewed (including policy makers and independent analysts) regarded above the assistance as not justified. In their view, at the time when the project was formulated, there were other agricultural and food sectors exposed to inconsistent and distortionary policies that faced many more severe economic difficulties and required much more attention than the almost completely privatized and relatively well-functioning crushing sector. Retrospectively, many of the people interviewed were surprised by the role FAO played in this exercise. There were some doubts as to whether FAO was not used as an instrument for pursuing specific interests of some groups.

The FAO Policy Assistance Project was implemented during from 2001-2002 in two phases (initially it was to consist of only one phase):

- **Phase I:** Preparation of a “Polish Rapeseed Sector Review”, (2001). Cost: USD 42 000.
- **Phase II:** Organization and participation in two seminars (March 2002 and November 2002). Cost: USD 43 000.

The total cost of the project was borne 70 percent by EBRD and 30 percent by FAO.

The policy recommendations formulated by the FAO consultants during the first phase of the project are considered the most important project output as they “were intended to provide a strategy for the future development of the sector” and “should be considered as a priority by the government.”⁶

The analysis of the level of adoption of the recommendations shows that out of 14 “most important” recommendations, 12 recommendations (86 percent) were not adopted. Moreover, adoption of the two remaining recommendations may have little to do with this project, as they would most probably have been implemented anyway.

Participation of ministry officials during implementation of the first project phase can be described as weak. As there was not an official request for the policy assistance, most of the potentially responsible persons at the ministry were neither aware of the project nor of its report. Officials responsible for liaising with FAO described it as a “no-real project”. However, some consider that the project created an opportunity to initiate a dialogue among the key interest groups (i.e. on direct payments and sectoral implications of Poland’s EU membership) and collect additional arguments which could be used during EU accession negotiations.

Independent policy analysts affiliated with various public research institutes specialized in policy analysis of agriculture and food sectors felt completely ignored by the authors of the FAO report, both during project formulation as well as during analysis of the sector and formulation of policy recommendations. This was a source of concern because, as national policy experts, they were in strong disagreement with the report recommendations. After formal completion of the project, their opinion about the assistance provided by FAO proved to be quite influential.

The majority of people interviewed during the preparation of this case study considered the report (and the entire analysis) as too biased towards preservation of the interests of crushers. National policy

⁶ Polish Rapeseed Sector Review – Executive Summary, p viii.

makers supported the project itself but not its recommendations. Consultations on the side of FAO authors with other parties (e.g. rapeseed producers, ministry officials, independent analysts) regarding an analysis of situation, main conclusions, as well as possible implications and institutional constraints for adoption of recommendations, appeared insufficient. Due to a low priority assigned to the project, policy makers were not particularly interested in a critical assessment of policy recommendations at the time they were formulated. While the project was implemented almost autonomously during the first phase (i.e. without a close consultations with policy makers and policy analysts), involvement of the government during its second phase was much more visible through participation in two seminars. Yet, during the second phase it became quite clear that policy makers viewed the project's recommendations as material for discussion of the future of Polish rapeseed sector after EU accession only, and not as a priority issue itself, which would require more careful consideration.⁷

Several elements of the policy assistance process can be evaluated positively: flexibility, relatively short time frame of its implementation, and a good selection of the main players. Furthermore, the project was implemented according to well-established standards, e.g. rapidly produced policy report supplemented with activities aiming at institutional capacity building. In essence, the *formal* structure and modalities of its implementation were viewed by FAO as adequate.

3. Expertise mobilized by the policy assistance process

The project benefited from the services of two international consultants and of national consultants only in the second phase. An agricultural economist from the FAO Investment Centre and a policy officer from the FAO subregional office (Budapest) backstopped the project. The level of expertise was deemed not fully appropriate from a technical perspective.

- In view of interviews conducted with policy makers and independent policy analysts afterwards, the adoption of the project recommendations was not reasonable and professionally not justifiable. Moreover, putting project recommendations into practice had not been seriously considered as it would have brought about *additional* distortions to the economy and violated many existing (EU-compatible) legal rules. It is regrettable that no experienced national consultant had been associated with the early stage of the project, when recommendations were being formulated.
- Many of the experts interviewed highlighted that the analysis carried out was too focused on alleviation of *temporal sectoral instabilities* and disregarded the most important issues, such as mid-term conditions for the rapeseed sector in the perspective of EU accession, which had however been flagged as an important project objective. This, along with little if any consideration for eventual administrative, political and financial consequences of the adoption of the recommendations made, was considered by those interviewed as a serious weakness. Only seminars and discussion of various topics (including presentations by various interest groups) during the second phase of the project were assessed as generally "valuable" by policy makers.⁸

Moreover, the experts selected for the project lacked adequate communication skills that would have enabled them to enhance the level of participation by different interest groups.

It is likely that insufficient knowledge about the topic (CAP and EU policies) and too strong a link to EBRD prevented the FAO Investment Centre's technical officers or the Regional Office involved in the project from actively questioning the report's recommendations. The emphasis was placed more on formal conditions of the policy process (e.g. evidence of contacting various policy stakeholders) than on the quality of the process.

⁷ For political reasons, policy makers were at this time pursuing their own agenda, e.g. support of a dialog between the key stakeholders and willing to support any agreement between crushers and rapeseed producers. There was no evidence of any particular support assigned by policy makers to any other recommendation presented in the FAO report.

⁸ The especially strong support of crushers and rape seed producers for government's position regarding introduction of EU compatible direct payments was assessed as very positive.

4. Lessons learned

A number of very important lessons were learned from the project and subsequent case study preparation:

- Policy advisory activities on topics that are not a national priority and appear to be strongly associated with particular interests or donors have relatively less chances of having their recommendations implemented.
- When the national capacity exists, nationals can use some results of a policy assistance activity for other purposes that may suit their objectives better than what was initially intended by the assistance provided.
- It is important for policy advisors to understand the local conditions (policy orientation, major objectives pursued by the government and the country at large, interest groups and their views) and the opportunities and constraints these conditions offer for a particular policy advisory activity.
- Applicability should be a central criterion when formulating policy recommendations.

Lessons specific to FAO:

- Generally, all policy assistance projects implemented by FAO should be requested by the government and procedures respected, as well as the principle of government “ownership.” (In this case, it is questionable whether the request for policy assistance initiated by the group of edible oil producers would have been classified as justifiable by FAO had a systematic review of the situation of other agri-food sectors taken place.)
- Given its status as a neutral organization, FAO should pay more attention to the perception of the general public regarding its involvement in projects that could be assessed as biased in favour of the interests of certain groups.
- All policy activities or projects should be very carefully discussed with the government at the initial stage to assure that they will address the most important policy priorities.
 - Policy assistance projects (selection of issues and priority areas) should be planned ahead and not be a surprise to the government.
 - More resources should be provided to carefully plan policy assistance in each FAO member country.
 - External funds provided by donors should be used in a manner suitable to FAO and national priorities.
- Particular attention should be provided to the quality of policy assistance projects, i.e. selection of experts, enough time given for analysis and recommendations and quality backstopping.
- A comprehensive project monitoring and evaluation system should be developed at FAO to track achievements and assess their quality, as well as provide for independent assessments.

Annex IX

Saint Lucia – Assistance in National Fisheries Legislation by Yves Renard¹

1. Policy context

As a small island nation in the Eastern Caribbean with important fisheries resources, Saint Lucia has taken a strong interest in processes related to the international law of the sea and other international instruments relevant to the sector. At the time of the request for FAO assistance, the Department of Fisheries (DOF) was already engaged in an internal review of its fisheries legislation which, according to the original project document of 2001, “highlighted a number of deficiencies, including: protection of the interests of local fishermen vis-à-vis competing interests in the local waters; stakeholder participation in fisheries management; licensing of sport fishing; absence of a legal framework for the control of aquaculture; the need for control and regulation of fish landing sites and processing establishments; and improvement in the enforcement framework, i.e. measures with respect to registration and marking of vessels.”

The initiative for this policy assistance project that took place in 2001 came directly from the DOF in the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries. As expressed by the consultant who provided the policy assistance, “perhaps the most striking aspect of the Saint Lucian fisheries management situation at the moment... is the clear divergence between what is being done in practice in the area of fisheries management and administration and the legal framework established in the Fisheries Act and Fisheries Regulations”.

This short-term policy advice project must be placed against the background of the overall assistance and collaboration FAO has provided to the countries of the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS) over the past three decades. This in turn should itself be placed within the larger context of the collaboration between the Wider Caribbean region and FAO, primarily under the auspices of the Western Central Atlantic Fisheries Commission (WECAFC). FAO’s continuous involvement can be attributed to three main considerations:

- The United Nations Conference on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) began its work in 1973, giving states additional jurisdiction over fisheries resources adjacent to their coasts, with major implications for fisheries policy and operations. FAO was committed to assist its Member States in meeting these new responsibilities.
- FAO and its member states saw the need to promote fisheries monitoring, control and surveillance as critical requirements for effective conservation, management and development.
- Fisheries management and development were seen as important channels to achieve food security, especially in small-island developing states.

Within this overall context, the main steps and features of FAO’s collaboration with Saint Lucia and the rest of the region in the field of fisheries policy should be briefly described. Work on fisheries legislation in the region started in the early 1980s, with contributions of FAO and of several Canadian institutions, especially the Dalhousie Ocean Studies Programme, which provided a comprehensive framework for the development and management of the fisheries sector. At that time, FAO sponsored and convened a series of three regional workshops to develop the fisheries legislation for the OECS, involving fisheries personnel and representatives from the legal departments of the various governments concerned. The workshops resulted in the adoption of new fisheries legislation in most of the countries and territories of the OECS.

Soon after, in response to specific demands from the sub-region and in recognition of the specific conditions of the small island states of the eastern Caribbean, WECAFC established its Committee for the Development and Management of Fisheries in the Lesser Antilles, commonly known as the Lesser

¹ By **Yves Renard**, FAO Consultant, based on **Renard, Y.**, Saint Lucia Case Study: “Assistance in Fisheries Legislation” (TCP/STL/0165), FAO, Rome October 2006.

Antilles Committee, which held its first meeting in Saint Lucia in May 1983. All these efforts in fisheries development and marine resource management were receiving full political backing at the time.

Following this initial phase, FAO remained directly involved in fisheries policy and legislation processes throughout the region. In Saint Lucia, a first FAO-sponsored review took place in 1991 and another in 1996, which were motivated primarily by the need to ensure that the national policy instruments were consistent with the new international policy framework. The next main FAO activity in fisheries policy that was of direct relevance to Saint Lucia was the conduct of the policy assistance mission of 2001, which is the focus of this case study.

2. FAO and the policy assistance process

As previously mentioned, the initiative for this policy assistance project came directly from the DOF. The objective, as stated in the original project document, was “to support the internal review of fisheries legislation”. The project thus aimed at inserting itself in, and contributing to, an ongoing process of legal review driven and implemented by the country and its national institutions.

The expected outputs of the project were to:

- discuss and comment on the work being undertaken by the DOF to review, revise and update its legislation;
- translate all comments into legislative amendments to the current legislation, as appropriate;
- assess the requirements for legislative amendments to implement the UN Fish Stocks Agreement and the FAO Compliance Agreement;
- provide on-the-job training on drafting national legislation;
- discuss the provisions of the draft legislation with fishing industry stakeholders.

3. FAO's expertise

The impact of FAO's policy work on the fisheries sector in Saint Lucia and the rest of the region are of course too broad and too numerous to mention here, but it is possible to identify the main areas of expertise and achievement.

Over the years, FAO has provided a forum where policy issues could be identified and debated, without necessarily prescribing solutions or instruments, but creating the conditions for these issues to be addressed. The forums have been made possible principally through WECAFC and its Lesser Antilles Committee, but also through the working parties, the *ad hoc* working groups and the various thematic workshops. Most of FAO's work in the field of fisheries policy is not directly aimed at defining the contents of policy in the Caribbean, as this is clearly the domain of national governments and regional inter-governmental bodies, but its work provides the background information and the analyses needed for policy formulation, and encourages policy debate.

A less tangible but nevertheless very important output of FAO's involvement in fisheries policy in the region has been the strengthening of local capacity and “local policy voice”. This has been achieved in a variety of ways, through formal training programmes, exchanges, study tours and other forms of knowledge and information dissemination.

While being supportive of local agendas, FAO has been an implicit and explicit advocate of regional approaches, and has provided tangible support in this direction to regional institutions. FAO has also helped countries of the region, and the region as a whole, to enforce global policies and apply global instruments. In some respects, FAO has helped the region to fulfil its commitment to behave as a responsible global citizen, and to play an active role in global fora, in spite of the small size and limited capacities of these countries. FAO's work on global policy has remained fully consistent with national and regional conditions and priorities. Indeed of the most significant impacts and outputs of FAO's policy work in the fisheries sector in the region has been the facilitation of a complex, multi-dimensional process that has helped to build a very solid and coherent policy framework. FAO has contributed very directly to the definition and adoption of instruments of policy implementation. This is undoubtedly the most tangible set of outputs that has been delivered.

4. FAO management

The resources allocated to the project were:

- Four weeks of a legal expert provided by the FAO
- One workshop with fishing industry stakeholders
- Time of local counterparts and other participants estimated at 3 person-months.

The original time frame of the mission was March – May 2001. A draft final report was released within this time frame, and submitted to local counterparts for review and comments. On the basis of these comments, the final report was submitted in September 2001. Following receipt of the final version of the report, the DOF continued the process of legal review, and one officer was assigned to gather comments and coordinating the inputs from all members of staff.

5. Lessons learned

Linking national, regional and global processes

This case study demonstrated that policy assistance interventions are most effective when they occur in a broader framework where policy issues are identified and debated and policy options are considered. It also showed that policy assistance can be a suitable means for linking national and regional policies and processes to the international policy context, and demonstrating to countries the relevance of the international context.

In this context, policy assistance constituted a mechanism to link global and local policy and the wide range of actors involved. This places an organization such as FAO in the challenging role of facilitator, having to balance the need for impartiality with a commitment to promote and support specific policy objectives. This study suggests that this role is best performed by putting issues on the agenda and options on the table, instead of imposing specific solutions, and by providing the moments and the spaces where policy issues and directions can be discussed and explored.

At the same time, in the Caribbean, the regional approach to fisheries policy is particularly important because national policies alone are unable to deal with shared resources and issues. Moreover, regional policy helps to pool and exchange technical expertise and experiences. It also validates and supports national policy and gives it more weight on the international scene.

Coordination

Coordination of policy and development assistance is highly desirable. In the fisheries sector in the Caribbean, coordination has been effective and beneficial due to a number of factors and actions by FAO, including:

- The use of WECAFC as a mechanism for exchange of information and harmonisation of policies.
- FAO's participation in activities and processes led and sponsored by other organizations.
- Provision of explicit and implicit support to the strengthening of regional institutions and their roles as coordinators and facilitators.

Design and implementation

When designing and implementing policy assistance, continuity is important, particularly in terms of the people, who should share a long-term vision of what fisheries management and development should be, develop and use an intimate knowledge of local issues, processes and actors, and be able to link various interventions, provide follow-up and place actions within a larger context.

In this regard, it is also important to involve a mix of local and external experts. Policy assistance is far more effective when it combines local relevance with external validation, when it allows external consultants to participate in and contribute to local institutions and processes, and when it also gives local experts the opportunity to participate in external and global processes. Moreover, it is always to

select people with the right combination of technical skills, experience, ability to communicate and legitimacy to provide advice in a given policy environment.

Some guidelines

In the design and implementation of policy assistance interventions, a number of simple guidelines emerged:

- It is desirable to assess the status of implementation of past recommendations, and the reasons for non-implementation when applicable, before making more recommendations.
- Attention should be paid to the quality of the request and to the process through which the request is formulated, as a policy assistance initiative can be much more effective if the key actors are given the opportunity to contribute to its design.
- The rapidity of a response to a request for policy assistance is critical, but it must be applied without compromising on quality.
- The duration of a policy process is important.
- The use of concrete examples to support policy advice is always beneficial, as it is easier for the recipients of policy assistance to use the experience of another country rather than deal with an issue in abstraction.
- Regardless of the length of time and type of process used, recommendations have a better chance of being adopted when they are accompanied with a plan of action.
- It is always better to allow recommendations and conclusions to emerge from local processes.
- Policy-making is a multi-dimensional and inter-sectoral process, and the policy process is a cyclical one. Institutions delivering policy assistance need to understand that cycle and ensure that their interventions, which are typically linear and punctual, can be inserted into complex policy cycles and processes.
- Countries prefer to define their own policy goals and objectives; they do not always welcome international assistance in defining the *content* of development policy. At the same time, in some instances it can be desirable for an organization such as the FAO to be forceful in advocating the need for a statement of policy objectives.
- FAO's policy assistance has been less concerned with the policy processes, and this may be a weakness, as countries would benefit from more targeted and intensive efforts aimed at building their internal capacity for policy reform and development and at enhancing the quality and effectiveness of the processes they use.

Annex X

Serbia – Institutional Development and Capacity Building for the National Forest Program of Serbia

by Tanya Alfredson¹

1. Policy context

In 2001, after decades of quasi-communist rule, civil war, economic sanctions and international isolation, the Republic of Serbia faced a devastated national economy. Its capacities in education, technology and the private sector were deteriorated and its infrastructures anachronistic. Popular defeat of President Milosevic in the 2000 national elections ushered in a series of shifts in the domestic and international political context. A new national agenda of institutional reform and modernization reflected the mood of a population that was eager to break with the past, overcome crippling poverty, and resurrect its standing with the world.

Although the forestry sector accounted for only 0.03 percent of Serbia's Gross Domestic Product (2001), forest land occupies 27 percent of Serbian territory. Between 1990 and 2001, foreign exchange earnings from Serbian wood product exports had fallen from USD 195 million to USD 30 million. Reforestation rates, administration and forestry management practices had also drastically declined. The forestry sector provides employment opportunities for rural Serbian populations with few other prospects for income generation, supplies fuel and non-timber products for household consumption and sale, and contributes to the aesthetic and recreational resources of the nation. Although nearly 50 percent of Serbian forests are privately owned, plots are small and scattered, administrative services to the private forests are poor and wood quality very low. These deteriorated conditions reflect the economic hardship of the country as a whole, but are also the result of an institutionalized neglect of private forests. The new government's national strategic agenda, which included transition to a market economy and entrance into the EU as key objectives, created pressure on public officials to rectify the historic neglect of this sector. The Serbian government requested FAO assistance in establishing a modern forestry administration equipped to compete in a market oriented economy.

The FAO Technical Cooperation Programme (TCP) project *Development and Capacity Building for The National Forest Programme of Serbia (TCP/YUG/2902(A))* was the first internationally sponsored development project in the Republic of Serbia after the removal of UN sanctions. FAO assistance was requested to help establish a modern forestry administration and was delivered in two phases. In the first phase, international consultants conducted an exploratory mission to understand challenges facing the sector. Their recommendations for further assistance were presented in an inception report in December 2001. The second phase evolved from a project proposal and was funded at USD 301 000 over 20 months. The stated objectives were to:

- Draft a forestry policy and strategy for the forest sector.
- Revise the existing forestry law or draft new legislation harmonized with other national legislation and recent international agreements, conventions and resolutions relevant to forestry.
- Design a self-reliant forestry institutional framework capable of providing leadership for sustainable development of the sector, including private forestry development.
- Strengthen national capacities for policy and programme development.

Five TCP recommendations were analysed for this case study. The recommendations and their status of implementation at the time of review are as follows:

1. Develop public participation in the forestry sector organized on all levels and including all stakeholder groups. (*Successfully implemented*)
2. Develop private forestry cooperatives and associations. (*Partially implemented*)

¹ By **Jean Balié** from the Serbia Case study on Lesson learning in policy assistance by **Tanya Alfredson**, November 2006.

3. Draft a new national forestry strategy based on participation and in harmony with European guidelines. (*Implemented after the project*)
4. Draft a new Forestry Law harmonized at all levels: international (European) and national (across sectors and with the Forestry policy). (*Not implemented*)
5. Develop state trade policy to encourage domestic production by cutting customs duties for imported wood processing machinery and equipment. (*Not implemented*)

2. FAO's design of the policy assistance process

The effectiveness of the policy assistance process in Serbia was influenced by a number of factors:

- It originated with a Serbian request and the project's effectiveness benefited from this demand driven process.
- It was delivered at an opportune political moment, when the national mood was one of eagerness for broad reform and the international context was favourable. This could be seen as an example of a policy window.
- The expertise and thoroughness of the exploratory mission was an important first step in creating a solid understanding of the issues facing the sector and for setting a positive tone for later FAO/client government interactions based on trust and respect.
- Initiatives benefited when assistance was well timed and sequenced.
- Other successes could be attributed to the ability of team leaders to work across problems and to tie together resources and achievements synergistically.
- Adoption of recommendations was facilitated when FAO experts were able to convey how the recommendation helped to address individual stakeholder interests and concerns.
- Contacts with bilateral donors established during the course of the TCP were instrumental for sustaining needed funding for follow-up efforts.

However, the project faced a number of significant contextual and logistical challenges. The Serbian leadership's stated strategic objectives of achieving accession to the EU and of transitioning to a market-oriented economy created strong incentives throughout the government to adopt international standards and practices and to promote cooperative approaches that facilitated FAO's efforts to develop participative processes. On the other hand, a dearth of national experience with participatory policy making, including an absence of supporting institutional or legal frameworks, made the first two recommendations completely innovative, and created many challenges for implementation.

The primary challenges coming from the national context related to the adoption of the third recommendation and included poor pre-existing communication both between the sectors and within the forestry sector itself, and widespread lack of information or access to bad information upon which to build stakeholder dialogue on a new forestry strategy. Factors which facilitated adoption of recommendations included the existence of a pro-reform government and the presence of highly supportive and forward thinking persons in the ministry who were eager to enhance the productivity of the sector and bring it into step with developments in the international arena.

The fact that there was a lack of clear vision at the ministry of what the forestry law should look like also represented a major challenge for the project. In addition, because domestic laws in many sectors were under revision, the task of creating forestry laws (fourth recommendation) that were harmonized with other national laws was also very difficult and sometimes logistically impossible. This was compounded by the existence of inconsistent international legal frameworks.

The fifth recommendation does not appear to have ever been afforded high priority within the project, which tended to focus on more macro-level concerns. The recommendation was informed by members of the private sector, who wanted more direct support from the Serbian government, but failed to take into account the view of government and the majority of stakeholders that the proposed mechanism (cutting customs duties) was not a realistic option given the lack of national resources and the prevailing attitudes of policy makers. The recommendation was never viewed as politically viable and no substantial effort to change this perception appears to have been made. At the same time, other recommendations to enhance government support for the private sector by, for example, increasing state investment in forestry roads, equipment and training, appeared more promising.

Therefore, the main question is why this recommendation was made if it was neither perceived as a priority nor sufficiently supported by bringing in convincing arguments and generating stakeholder approval.

3. Expertise mobilized by the policy assistance process

Expertise is a valuable commodity in the process of creating stakeholder confidence in FAO's recommendations. An essential feature of FAO assistance was the ability of FAO international consultants to work closely with national consultants, including sub-recommendations to tailor approaches to stakeholder groups. Project consultants won the confidence of Serbian government officials, and ultimately the quality and credibility of the provided expertise helped build trust. Specifically, it was noted by numerous national participants that the high-level profile of selected experts helped establish the credibility and authority of subsequent activities and eventually FAO programmes. The involvement of the senior consultant was vital to the success of the recommendations and of the project in general. He was described on multiple occasions as an inspirational figure who could be recognized as an authority figure. His expertise and ability to capture an understanding of the Serbian experience earned him respect and confidence, which were key factors in the positive reception of many of the recommendations.

The effects of inadequate technical knowledge and expertise in the area of forestry law were one of the main explanations for the non-adoption of the fourth recommendation. Participants in the working group for a new forestry law complained that the legal work of the national consultants failed to provide the guidance needed. (The adoption of fourth recommendation also suffered from understaffing in general.)

4. FAO's policy assistance management

Project management, planning and conflict management skills are important to successful policy assistance. Technical assistance should include assistance geared towards ensuring the sustainability of proposed initiatives. FAO project staff cultivated relationships with bilateral donors during the TCP portion of the project. A successor project under FAO/Finnish government direction called "Forest Sector Development in Serbia" (GCP/FRY/003/FIN) continued to provide activities to reinforce gains made under the initial assistance effort. On the other hand, frequent personnel changes at an early stage of the project interfered with assistance process.

When the project faced a dearth of legal expertise and conflict among team members from different disciplines, management could have been better at providing supervision of relatively inexperienced national experts, supporting the steering committee and playing a more pro-active role in intra-team conflict resolution.

Greater staffing levels on the project would also have enabled the team to provide additional support to private owners that would have improved the pace and rate of success.

Lastly, consultants and members of the ministry expressed frustration with FAO procedures. For instance, the view was frequently expressed that institutional procedures related to FAO communications, resource allocations and staffing slowed down progress on the project and created a negative image of the organization.

5. Lessons learned

Although not all recommendations examined were fully adopted in the course of the project, for the most part they made important contributions to the national policy dialogue, helped to better illustrate domestic challenges, and in many cases continued to be addressed in the national debate and bilateral assistance projects. A number of important lessons emerged:

Relationship-building as a foundation for effective policy assistance. It was felt by many members of the Serbian government team that FAO's cultivation of positive working relationships with key figures at the ministry was an important ingredient in the project's successes. Many persons interviewed felt these efforts helped to build confidence in key FAO staff. The Serbian case suggests

that this confidence is an important pre-requisite for an effective assistance process and a healthy policy dialogue.

The importance of timing and sequencing of policy assistance strategies. FAO's work in Serbia underscores that successful adoption of policy recommendations requires support not only from policy makers and authorities, but also from intended beneficiaries. A sequencing of assistance efforts, beginning with stakeholder education and early involvement of key government figures, proved effective. Flexibility in timing is also important, especially with respect to participation. Although implementation efforts went beyond the scheduled end date, stakeholders agreed that the delays were necessary to create ownership of the finished product. The trade-off was viewed unanimously as an acceptable one.

The need for contingency planning when sequencing does not fall as anticipated. For example, due to delays in the adoption of a national forestry strategy the FAO/DF drafting team began drafting a new forestry law before a national forestry strategy had even been created. The project would have greatly benefited if it had been able to bring in additional legal assistance quickly and at an early stage of the process, in order to compensate for these conditions.

Realistic communication strategies. Challenges related to communications (phone, internet, road accessibility) often constrained the technical assistance process, especially in disseminating information on pre-existing laws (and drafts). Communication infrastructures should be well understood in advance of project start-up so that adequate communication strategies can be devised at the outset of programmes.

The essential role of strong and committed national counterparts. Leadership from the ministry gave strong support to the recommendations. A supportive Director of the Directorate of Forests also played a facilitative role to win support for the process. The project team understood that involvement of top-level decision makers would be essential, even though the time constraints they faced would make it harder to involve them in workshops and trainings.

Capacity building activities as an essential component of assistance. Project staff provided ministry staff and rural communities with conflict management techniques, which helped them overcome long-standing conflicts that had been a barrier to association.

Creating linkages within and among project components. Implementation of the first recommendation laid a crucial foundation for the second (creation of Private Forest Owner Associations). Stakeholders and FAO staff benefited from previous training in project management and were able to apply the acquired skills to their work with private foresters. Similarly, the degree of stakeholder receptiveness was partially due to preparations made during previous phases.

Cost-benefit analyses. Cost-benefit analyses should be considered as an additional tool in the assessment and planning stages of the project to help consultants concentrate their final set of recommendations on those with the highest probability of success, given available domestic resources.

Proper oversight. Project coordinators and team leaders should be held accountable for providing needed oversight. More on-site presence by the team leader and greater involvement of existing national capacity would have greatly improved outcomes.

Streamlining FAO procedures. There is a need to streamline FAO procedures (hiring, authorizations, timely payments) so that country offices may adapt to local conditions with greater flexibility and less delay.

Annex XI

Sierra Leone – Agriculture Sector Review and Agriculture Development Strategy

by Fatoumata Jawara¹

1. Policy context

Located in West Africa, Sierra Leone is endowed with abundant natural resources but remains one of the poorest countries in the world, with an estimated 80 percent of its more than 5 million inhabitants living below the poverty line. An 11-year civil war between 1990 and 2001 precipitated wanton destruction of the country's infrastructure, displaced half of the population and exacerbated the incidence of poverty, hunger and malnutrition.

After a period of introspection about the factors that led to the outbreak of war, the Government of Sierra Leone (GoSL) and the international community took steps to promote peace and stability, restructure and decentralize government institutions, tackle corruption, poverty and hunger and resuscitate the economy. Although some players within the policy community articulated that reviving and transforming the agriculture sector was crucial in the process of reconstruction, its importance was woefully sidelined during the formulation of the 2001 Interim Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (I-PRSP).

It was against this backdrop that the National Policy Advisory Committee of Sierra Leone (a think tank) and FAO formally encouraged the GoSL to place agriculture at the centre of its transformation and economic development strategy. The government responded after the general elections in 2002, when President Ahmed Tejan Kabbah unveiled a bold commitment to food security and the right to food, and pledged that "no Sierra Leonean should go to bed hungry by 2007" during his inaugural address to the nation.

The context in which the FAO project operated was constituted by favourable and unfavourable elements to its implementation.

Favourable elements included:

- The President's pledge, which helped to focus minds within the policy.
- The good reputation of FAO in the country as a trusted adviser and advocate in government policy circles.

Unfavourable elements included:

- The weakness of human resources capacity at the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security (MAFS) regarding food security policy coordination, implementation, monitoring and evaluation, especially at mid-management levels; and low retention of experienced staff.
- Bureaucratic constraints on resource allocation by the Ministry of Finance for the implementation of policy objectives. This budget programming process also tends to often overlook the seasonal nature of agricultural programmes.
- Donor representatives based in Sierra Leone were concerned about working with MAFS, due to accountability concerns, which was a serious constraint for using funds available for agriculture programmes.

Of mixed influence was the government's burgeoning decentralization and restructuring activities. Triggered by shifts in policy thinking, these activities could potentially improve governance systems; on the other hand, they could significantly put the brakes on policy adoption and implementation processes in some sub-sectors (notably the forestry sub-sector).

¹ By **Materne Maetz**, Policy Assistance Division, FAO, based on **Jawara, F.**, Lesson learning in policy assistance Country Case study Sierra Leone, Agriculture Sector Review and Agriculture Development Strategy, FAO, October 2006.

2. FAO and the policy assistance process

UN agencies and FAO in particular took advantage of the policy window opened by the President's speech by dispatching a high-level mission to Sierra Leone in 2002 in order to seek ways of fulfilling the pledge. During the consultations, the possibility of launching a comprehensive Agriculture Sector Review (ASR) project and organizing a Right to Food Symposium were discussed.

Meanwhile, the MAFS produced a Medium-Term Agricultural Strategy document for food security with assistance from academics at N'jala University in Sierra Leone, the International Institute for Tropical Agriculture (IITA) in Nigeria, and FAO Sierra Leone. The document was subsequently presented to the World Bank for funding support. Although it highlighted the key areas in the sector requiring attention, it fell short of providing requisite background studies to inform a long-term development strategy and the forthcoming PRSP. The ASR supported by the project analysed here, which took place between April and October 2003, filled the gaps in the MAFS strategy document by providing in-depth information on the status of the agriculture and fisheries sectors, identifying investment options required for the transformation of the entire sector and enabling a sufficient incorporation of food security and agriculture into the PRSP.

World Bank, IFAD and UNDP joined FAO and GoSL as implementing partners. The process began in earnest after the first Right to Food Symposium in Sierra Leone in May 2003. A multidisciplinary team of 20 international consultants and 18 national counterparts were involved in what turned out to be a complex operation. A National Steering Committee chaired by the Deputy, MAFS, was established to provide general oversight of the activities of the team, and an international team leader and one national team leader were appointed to coordinate the activities of the sub-sector specialists and their local counterparts.

As a result, the ASR produced policy recommendations and options, along with proposals for pre-investment and investment projects, which fed directly into Sierra Leone's PRSP, produced in 2005. Counterparts saw also their capacity strengthened.

Methods used to shape policy recommendations included: reviews of existing government policies; surveys and diagnostic studies; and interviews and consultations with stakeholders (including farmers). These methods ensured a good degree of ownership of the recommendations by national stakeholders. On the whole, the dialogue process was well executed. Original policy ideas were born of the exchange of regional and international experiences between the ASR participants and the findings contained in the diagnostic studies. The fact that the ASR took place before the much-anticipated National Census meant that it missed out on a useful source of up-to-date information.

However, at the time of review, the ASR documents had still not been formally launched. Although draft versions of the documents were available to the ASR participants after wrap-up, dissemination of the final version of the documents occurred only in June/July 2006, which was considered late by some of the persons interviewed for this case study. Despite this, the outputs of the ASR are being used by many as reference material. Demand for the documents by those respondents who did not participate was high. Suggestions were made that a wider cross-section of stakeholders should receive copies, especially the District Directors of Agriculture, non-governmental organizations, universities and parliamentarians.

3. Expertise mobilized by the policy assistance process

As mentioned earlier, the ASR was conducted by a multidisciplinary team of 20 international consultants and 18 national counterparts coordinated by one international and one national coordinator. An international research specialist developed the research methodology for the sub-sectors, the institutions specialist was charged with carrying out a survey of the relevant institutions and a project analyst joined the team to prepare the synthesis report and edit the findings. Other experts worked on special issues such as Gender and Sociology, Food Safety Nets, Community and Farmer-based Organizations and the Right to Food.

National counterparts were primarily tasked with infusing local knowledge and experience in the respective subject areas and supporting the international team during the research, dialogue and

policy formulation processes. However, a good number were unable to fulfil their supportive roles effectively, as the level of expertise of ASR national counterparts selected by GoSL ranged from very poor to good.

Participants (including the national team leader) have commended the quality of work produced for the crops sub-sector by the international Agronomy specialist of FAO. Contributions from the Land Tenure, Right to Food, Food Safety Nets, Agricultural Extension, Agricultural Research and Marketing and Trade specialists from FAO were judged as being among the best. However, contributions from the Rural Finance, Community and Farmer-based Organizations, Forestry and Gender and Social Aspects specialists fell below expectations.

Moreover, disappointing performances by the international team leader and the project analyst affected the process and outcome of the project and prolonged the wrap-up phase.² A more versatile and proactive international team leader would have enhanced the quality levels of some of the technical documents.

Despite some shortcomings, which were mitigated through replacements and reassignments of tasks to other team members as the project unfolded,³ it is the general opinion that the presence in post-conflict Sierra Leone of a large multidisciplinary team of international specialists was a morale-boosting experience for national counterparts. The diversity of skills and the level of knowledge-sharing contributed to achieving positive results for the project.

4. FAO policy assistance management

The time frame and arena for the project appear to have been appropriate, although there were concerns about time management once the process began. In particular, some international specialists left before completing their tasks. Also, international specialists arrived at different times as the project unfolded, causing planning and coordination bottlenecks. ASR participants interviewed during the preparation of this case study felt that these issues limited the amount of time spent on substantive and procedural discussions in a team setting. Some felt that the team was simply too large for effective coordination; others considered that effective project management rather than team size was the core problem of the Sierra Leone ASR.

The lack of financial compensation of national counterparts as promised through a prior “gentleman’s agreement” caused some discontent in the national team. Promising financial compensation to national counterparts does not seem to be good practice as their services are an integral part of the government’s contributions to the policy assistance project and thus FAO is not obliged to make financial compensation other than daily subsistence allowances during periods of travel. These issues should be clarified at the outset, to avoid lingering misunderstandings that can compromise the working atmosphere.

5. Lessons learned

As pointed out by an official from the Planning Evaluation Monitoring and Statistics Division of MAFS, “For every major policy shift it is always necessary to conduct a thorough situational analysis...the ASR was able to deliver on that front.” The project indisputably churned out a vast array of policy recommendations for the short and long term in the various sectors and sub-sectors. And they have been widely adopted.

The key positive lesson which could be drawn from the Sierra Leone case study is the importance of gauging the national policy mood and aligning intervention strategies accordingly. Other important lessons are described below.

² According to a number of ASR team members the international Team Leader under-performed as manager of the ASR project, could not synthesize ASR material for the main report, and left prematurely. The international Co-team Leader subsequently assumed wrap-up and other tasks.

³ One specialist was replaced during the process and reassignments were necessary in cases where international specialists left before completing their tasks and/or draft technical reports.

Quality of specialists' contributions. As with any project of this magnitude, the calibre of specialists varied and so did the quality (background information, clarity and originality of recommendations, etc.) of the technical documents they produced. Sierra Leone was reeling from the effects of a devastating conflict, and a good number of national counterparts could not fulfil their supportive roles effectively. Therefore, there was a need for FAO to be extra vigilant in making sure that the selected specialists were adequately briefed and had some experience working in complex environments before the launch of the project.

Ownership of the process. Establishing a National Steering Committee, widening the policy dialogue circle and linking the project with the PRSP cemented ownership of the process and outcomes of the project.

Project follow-up. It is critical to ensure that project monitoring and follow-up plans are in place, preferably before the launch of the project. These issues were not adequately addressed and thus had some negative effects on the project outcome.

Annex XII

South Africa – Formulation of an Integrated Food Security and Nutrition Programme in South Africa

by Colin Mc Carthy¹

1. Policy context

At the national level, South Africa does not face a problem of food insecurity. However, at micro-level, household and intra-household food insecurity and malnutrition are prevalent because of constraints in access to adequate food supplies as well as deficiencies in nutrition. This can causally be linked to poverty and unemployment, which means that addressing the problem of food insecurity and poor nutrition cannot be the domain of a single government agency or resolved through one single policy measure. A multi-faceted approach is required that covers efforts by all levels of government, and policy coordination therefore becomes extremely important. It is this need that brought about the request for FAO assistance in formulating an **Integrated Food Security and Nutrition Programme** (IFSNP) for South Africa.

The Government of South Africa made a request for FAO support, and in March 2003 the project (TCP/SAF/2903) was approved and subsequently launched in July 2003. As a Technical Cooperation Programme (TCP) project, it was destined to run through a defined project cycle starting with a request for assistance addressed to the Director-General of FAO; the appraisal of the project at different levels of FAO; the approval of the project by the Director-General of FAO; the signing of a project agreement with the government; and the implementation and monitoring of the project jointly by FAO and relevant national institutions. The final phase is completion and follow-up, signalled by a terminal statement or concluding letter from FAO to the government. This is followed, one year later, by a report to FAO headquarters and the government by the national institutions concerned and the FAO Representative in which the follow-up as well as catalytic impact of the project are reviewed.

The project analysed here was aborted before the final stage could be reached. Consequently, the research methodology and report design for this case study could not analyse policy effectiveness in terms of the adoption and implementation of policy assistance recommendations. Rather, the study focused on the process of the project to identify the principal events in the implementation leading to the eventual breakdown, the causes of the termination, and the management of the breakdown itself.

The research method adopted consisted of desk research of selected publications and all project documents; structured interviews with a number of South African government officials, researchers and FAO staff; and electronic correspondence with FAO personnel in particular. The objective of the case study was to learn lessons from a process that failed to produce an outcome and recommendations that the Government of South Africa could either implement or not implement. It also sought to reach some conclusions as to how termination could have been avoided.

2. Causes of failure²

Although the “exogenous/endogenous” categorization specified for the lesson-learning exercise could not be used to analyse a terminated project, the distinction between exogeneity and endogeneity provided a useful reference to evaluate the process and the reasons for the project’s failure.

Lack of government cooperation

All research indicates that the principal cause of the project’s failure was the ineffectual participation of the government. The FAO officials and consultants who worked on the project were unable to obtain the necessary commitment, cooperation and input from the government officials concerned. It was precisely this lack of commitment and cooperation that led to the suspension of project activities

¹ By **Colin McCarthy**, FAO consultant, based on **McCarthy, C.**, Case Study: Formulation of an Integrated Food Security and Nutrition Programme in South Africa (Ref: TCP/SAF/2903), FAO, November 2006.

² Since the project was aborted, the purpose and structure of this case study differ from those of the others.

and subsequently to an effort to resuscitate it, which in turn brought forth no national response and cooperation. It would seem that the project just faded away.

Why did national cooperation not materialize? Some of the explanations offered can be regarded as speculative, but they are at least informed speculation.

- One explanation, offered by an FAO official, is that the FAO staff and consultants did not fully understand the internal dynamics of the Department of Agriculture (DoA) and the protocol procedures required, i.e. the right buttons to press and people to contact to move matters forward.
- Government departments in South Africa are still in a process of post-apartheid transformation, which could explain the high staff turnover that affected the project.
- The project was an adjunct of policies already in place. Assistance was sought to integrate existing strategies; the element of urgency expected of a TCP project was absent. Discussions also revealed the possibility that FAO, specifically the Director-General, might have attached higher priority to having the project on board as a TCP project than what applied in the mind of the South African authorities.
- The current (2006) FAO Representative in South Africa emphasized that by 2004 the project had been overtaken by events, specifically the National Medium Term Investment Programmes that exist as part of the Comprehensive African Agriculture Development Programme, which in turn is a NEPAD (New Partnership for Africa's Development) initiative. It was asserted that FAO's eventual effort to resuscitate the project did not receive much reaction because of that larger programme. Currently, one of these "major programmes" is the FAO-supported Special Programme for Food Security, which is strongly supported by the Director General of the DoA.
- The lack of enthusiasm and hence cooperation, compared to the situation found in other African countries, can be ascribed to the fact that South Africa is not a borrowing country. In South Africa the intention to borrow is not a factor that encourages cooperation with international development agencies and consultants. It has also been pointed out by FAO and government officials that since South Africa has substantial academic and research capacity, the view in some official circles is that national capacity exists to do the work offered by international agencies.

Two other explanations have also been raised. The first is the relative weak position of the DoA within the ministerial Social Cluster. This is difficult to assess, and while it could be true it does not logically explain a lack of cooperation. It could affect the output of the project and the acceptance and implementation of recommendations, but not the management of the project. The second explanation was offered by a government official who saw a reason for failure in the difference in FAO and government expectations. It is not clear what these differences are, and furthermore, they should have surfaced and been addressed when TCP assistance was requested and the Project Agreement concluded.

Divergent views within FAO

Research indicated that divergent views on the project also existed within FAO, specifically between the Policy Assistance Division and the Field Operations Division. Some divergence had to do with the relation between the IFSNP and the Special Programme on Food Security managed by the Special Programmes Management and Coordination Service within the Field Operations Division. This might have had an important impact on the ability of FAO to respond to and interact in a proper fashion with the government. However, an FAO executive responded that he does not recall any divergence of views between the two FAO divisions on the design and implementation of the project. He also mentioned that the Field Operations Division was a member of the task force in charge of implementing the project and ensuring consistency between the activities of the two divisions in South Africa. The divisions joined efforts to reactivate the initiative when the government's interest seemed to be fading, and both divisions shared the same objective and strategy in efforts to obtain a higher commitment from the DoA.

3. Lessons learned

The analysis of the demise of an approved project can produce lessons which are as important as those derived from projects that have successfully run the full cycle of implementation. The first

operational objective of any approved policy assistance project must be to produce a final outcome in the form of recommendations based on rigorous investigation. The project must run its course to completion; termination represents a waste of financial and human resources.

By definition, FAO has no control over exogenous forces that can bring about the termination of projects. From an endogenous perspective, however, it can consider internal mechanisms, procedures and management systems that can avoid elements of systemic failures in managing projects. But equally important is the need to develop procedures that will allow FAO to address operational problems caused by exogenous factors, and if a project cannot be rescued, to manage its termination in a properly recorded way.

Some general and specific lessons can be learned from the termination of the project.

The importance of institutions

Institutions are important when policy assistance and implementation are considered, and the failure of a project can to a large extent be ascribed to institutional factors. Organizations that have to play by the rules are served by people, who, in the context of FAO-government relationships, are the civil servants that work at all levels of government. This means that institutional failure can be brought about by the failure of administrators and managers to obey the rules of interaction. FAO is also an organization that has to play by the rules and is also exposed to the failure of officers to play by them.

The need for fall-back positions

Pre-emptive arrangements need to be built into the operational framework of TCP projects, especially if project termination has occurred before it has been fully implemented. In this case study, signals of a lack of government cooperation surfaced relatively early into the project, and the TCP operational framework should have provided for such an eventuality with prescribed action recorded in the Project Agreement. The very least that is required is an operational guide on how, under what conditions, and when, a project is to be terminated formally before it has completed the full cycle. The operational framework provides for terminal statements or concluding letters for completed projects, but there does not seem to be a provision for an official "project termination" report. In addition, a study of FAO documentation did not reveal that the existing Field Programme Management Information System (FPMIS) had been applied to the project in a way that could have served as an early-warning system of project failure.

Systematic and coherent record-keeping

The apparent absence of an FAO progress record was remarkable. What is available is a number of "back-to-office" and other reports, but not a coherent progress report of the project that gives a sequential overview of activities, progress and problems experienced. In the electronic era with its highly efficient and cost-effective information processing systems, keeping and editing such a record should be a relatively easy task.

Annex XIII

Enhancing the Effectiveness of Policy Assistance: Analytical Framework for Country Case Studies

by J. Balié and M. Aguirre

1. Introduction

The purpose of this analytical framework is to help consultants identify, analyse and draw preliminary lessons from the country case studies. This analytical framework proposes a step-by-step approach to undertake a country case study but also offers a fair degree of flexibility to adapt to various local conditions.

Structure of the Analytical Framework

PART 1: PRELIMINARY RESEARCH AND ANALYSIS	106
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PART 3: ANALYSIS OF SELECTED POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS	110
PART 4: COMPARATIVE SUMMARY, FINDINGS AND PRELIMINARY LESSONS LEARNED	112

The four tables inserted in the framework need to be filled by the consultants and included in their report. Additional comments or information can be provided to further explain and justify the content of each table.

Table 1 : List of all policy recommendations	109
Table 2 : Explanation of the status of adoption	111
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Table 4 : Synthesis of findings and identification of preliminary lessons	112

Core analytical issues

1. How can we characterize the effectiveness of a policy assistance intervention?
2. How can we identify the favourable conditions under which policy assistance can be effective and unfavourable conditions that constraint the policy assistance?
3. How can we identify good practices of policy assistance interventions?

Preliminary remarks

The identification of policy recommendations to be analysed in greater detail should cover the whole spectrum of the project.

The consultant may wish to differentiate the policy recommendations according to their policy nature (e.g. regulatory, institutional, technical, and financial). Policy recommendations can also be distinguished type of advice: macro-sector interface; sector; sub-sector; specific issue.

PART 1: PRELIMINARY RESEARCH AND ANALYSIS

<p>Step 1</p>	<p>Identify source of information on policy assistance project:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Available material (project documents, evaluation reports, report on outputs, etc.). • Interviews with resource persons and other stakeholders.
<p>Step 2</p>	<p>Identify all recommendations as outputs of the policy assistance project.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build the list of recommendations. • Also identify other contributions that are not encapsulated in the recommendations.
<p>Step 3</p>	<p>Assess the recommendations according to the six following formulation criteria:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Availability of information and people. • Clarity of the what (y/n): Is the recommendation self-explanatory? • Clarity of the why (y/n): Extent to which the recommendation is relevant to the problem/issue it addresses. • Clarity of the how (y/n): Description of the process for implementing the recommendation. • Clarity of the who (y/n): Information about the targeted authorities responsible for the implementation of the recommendation. • Independence: Are the recommendations independent or linked among each other? <p>One other dimension to be considered:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Degree of originality of the recommendation: Assess whether the recommendation is not yet widely shared among stakeholders at the time of the beginning of the project and which therefore adds value to the national policy debate.

PART 2: IDENTIFICATION OF POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS TO BE ANALYSED

<p>Step 4</p>	<p>Build a list of pre-selected policy recommendations by</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Taking into consideration <i>policy recommendations only</i>. Selecting those that are specific and <u>excluding those that are too general or too vague</u> unless they entail a strategic scope, in which case specific proposals on how the change should be affected must be made.
<p>Step 5</p>	<p>Select the policy recommendations to be analysed, first by using the <u>importance</u> criteria</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consult with the FAO author on the <u>most important policy recommendation for policy change made by the project</u>. Consult with government policy makers on the list of policy recommendations to identify the ones they believe are most important.
<p>Step 6</p>	<p>Assess the status of adoption of selected policy recommendations.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is a <u>first appraisal</u> that is left to the judgement of the consultant. • This assessment will be completed in the second phase of the analysis. The detailed actual status of adoption will be documented after the interviews with key stakeholders. <p>Ensure that the list of policy recommendations analysed offers a <u>good mix of implemented/not implemented policy recommendations</u>.</p>
<p>Step 7</p>	<p>Select the policy recommendations using the <u>Coverage</u> criteria.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This step refers to the <u>themes used at time of selection of the case studies</u> (agriculture policy, agriculture trade, environment, fisheries, food security, forestry, processing, Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers, rural development) and <u>categories</u> (macro-interface, sector, sub-sector, specific issue). • Policy recommendations should be chosen so as to be representative of the themes covered by the project.
<p>Step 8</p>	<p>Select the remaining policy recommendations according to the formulation criteria presented in step 3. The possible combinations of the formulation criteria allow for creation of clusters. Each <i>cluster</i> is defined by the possible combination of formulation criteria. The suggested steps are as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Classify the policy recommendations. • Determine how many policy recommendations belong to each cluster. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> i. y-y-y-y, where y-y-y-y = y (clarity of what); y (clarity of why); y (clarity of how) and y (clarity of who); select the policy recommendation. ii. n-n-n-n: Select one policy recommendation only if it is possible to work on it given the information availability. iii. The same logic applies for the rest of the cases. iv. y-y-n-n. v. y-y-y-n. vi. y-n-n-n. vii. other combinations if relevant. <p>Note:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Consultants will be able to decide the number of selected policy recommendations within each cluster depending on the total amount of policy recommendations.</i> • <i>Select the cluster of y-y-y-y. For this cluster, we suggest that those policy recommendations that are linked to others be eliminated. However, if dependent policy recommendations are well documented or can provide an interesting lesson, then it is worth including them in the analysis.</i> • <i>Repeat the same process for the n-n-n-n cluster.</i>

<p style="text-align: center;">Step 9</p>	<p>Label the selected policy recommendations. Identify the status of adoption differentiating by:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <u>Policy principle</u>, which regards a fundamental explanation of general reasons to adopt the policy recommendation. 2. <u>Policy objective</u>, when the policy recommendation is guided by the achievement of a certain purpose that is considered attainable. 3. <u>Policy instrument</u>, when the policy recommendation is concerned with using specific interventions in the agriculture sector and/or economy. <p>Note:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · <i>It is expected that policy recommendations corresponding to a principle will be complemented by more detailed policy recommendations at lower levels: at the objective, then at the instrument levels.</i> · <i>If the latter are implemented, then the former are also by necessity (in part at least). This means that the structure of the policy recommendations should be developed, showing how policy recommendations at the principle or objective level are to be implemented by means of other policy recommendations at the instrument level.</i> <p><i>However, it could be possible to have a situation where a lower level policy recommendation often contributes to implementing several higher-level ones, and where higher-level policy recommendations are implemented through several lower-level ones.</i></p>
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Table 1 : List of all policy recommendations

	STEP 3: Formulation criteria						Additional criteria	Criteria analysed in STEP 5 & 6			STEP 7 Coverage Criteria		Selected Policy Recommendations (Y/N)	STEP 9 Labelling	
	Info availability	Clarity on what (Y/N)	Clarity on why (Y/N)	Clarity on how (Y/N)	Clarity on who (Y/N)	Independence (Y/N)		Degree of originality of the recommendation	Importance criteria according to FAO team	Importance criteria according to national policy maker(s)	Status of adoption according to preliminary appraisal by the consultant	Themes			Categories
1															
2															
3															
4															
5															
6															
7															
8															
9															
10															
11															
12															
13															
...															

Note: Selected recommendations could be highlighted

PART 3: ANALYSIS OF SELECTED POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

Note: This analysis needs to be made for each policy recommendation

<p>Step 10</p>	<p>Describe the status of adoption of each policy recommendation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Status of adoption: has the policy recommendation been adopted by the authorities; was the sequencing of actions undertaken consistent with policy recommendation; and has it been integrated in the national policy framework (adopted in project report, reflected in a policy statement, in a decision taken, or actually implemented)? • Satisfaction of the status of adoption: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Are recipients/beneficiaries satisfied with the status of adoption? Why/why not? ○ Is FAO satisfied with the status of adoption? Why/why not?
<p>Step 11</p>	<p>Describe the exogenous factors that affected the process and the policy recommendation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NATIONAL POLICY CONTEXT (NPC): Local conditions in the country when the project was implemented; key elements of history; origin of the policy assistance intervention (political change, genuine request, FAO advocacy); international influence; others. • PLAYERS AND ISSUES (P&I): How stakeholders interact with each others, level of influence of each player, issues they encountered or raised (rank them if necessary according to their influence on the policy process). • POLICY PROCESS AND DIALOGUE (PPD): The policy process is the process through which the policy is “produced”. It helps clarify the player’s position with respect an issue and/or bring other players around this position. This section also includes information on the quality of the decision-making process, the extent to which relevant stakeholders were involved, and the degree of complexity of the institutional framework.
<p>Step 12</p>	<p>Describe the endogenous factors that affected the status of adoption of the recommendation. This analysis will focus on FAO’s response to the exogenous factors and will be conducted according to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Context in the Policy Assistance Project and in FAO (CPAP): This refers to several aspects in FAO and in the project team, including FAO internal politics, specific issues regarding FAO context, the level of support to the project, extent to which other issues regarding FAO affected the policy assistance process, and specific internal organization and management arrangements in FAO and/or in the project. • Process of the Policy Assistance Project (PPAP): This refers to several elements of the process to implement the policy assistance project: time frame (when, how long); targeted players (with whom); and the choice for policy interactions and the mode of operation (how and where). • Expertise of the Policy Assistance Project (EPAP): Quality and quantity of the technical inputs and adequacy of the experience.

PART 4: COMPARATIVE SUMMARY, FINDINGS AND PRELIMINARY LESSONS LEARNED

Step 15	<p>This exercise aims to synthesize and compare all the policy recommendations previously analysed.</p> <p>According to the analysis that was done, fill in the following table describing in few words the nature of the key factors influencing each recommendation. The various factors listed in column two will have to be further disaggregated for this purpose.</p>
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Table 3: Comparative summary

	Factors	Recommendation 1	Recommendation 2
Exoge- nous	National Policy Context			
	Players and Issues			
	Policy Process and Dialogue			
	Other...			
Endoge- nous	Context in FAO and the project			
	Policy Assistance Process			
	Expertise			
	Other...			

Step 16	<p>Identify findings and draw of preliminary lessons:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Using the previous step as input, identify relevant findings whether by FREQUENCY, STRENGTH OF EVIDENCE and/or SIGNIFICANCE. • Classify these main findings according to endogenous and exogenous factors (left column). • Reflect on the “main findings” column to draw preliminary lessons, do’s and don’ts, and best practices that can be derived from your comparative analysis.
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Table 4: Synthesis of findings and identification of preliminary lessons

	Factors	Main findings	Preliminary lessons, do’s and don’ts, best practices
Exogenous	National Policy Context		1) New endogenous approaches, and ways in which the exogenous dimension can be better taken into account (adapting policy assistance to exogenous factors): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ... • ... • ...
	Players and Issues		
	Policy Process and Dialogue		
	Other		
Endogenous	Process of Policy Recommendation		2) How can current approaches be enhanced? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ... • ... • ...
	Policy Assistance Process		
	Expertise		
	Other		

2. Proposed Guidelines for the Interviews

The aim of the interview guidelines is gather additional information on the policy recommendations to be analysed, and more specifically on their status of adoption, exogenous and endogenous factors that were influential. The interview may combine several policy recommendations depending on their nature and/or the person interviewed.

I. Read the recommendation (s)

- What do you think of this policy recommendation?
- To what extent would you consider that this policy recommendation has been adopted? Why?

II Questions on exogenous factors

Questions are related to National Policy Context, Players and Issues, and Policy Process and Dialogue.

- What is worth mentioning about the National Policy Context at the time the policy recommendation was made?
- What players were involved as supporters or opponents in the adoption of this policy recommendation? Why?
- From your view, what were the issues considered for this policy recommendation? Why?
- How would describe the policy process and dialogue that led to the adoption of this policy recommendation?

III Questions on endogenous factors


The goal is to find out the key elements regarding the context in FAO and in the project, the policy assistance process, and the expertise provided to arrive at the policy recommendation(s)

- What can you say about the context of the policy assistance project in FAO?
- To what extent would you consider that FAO and this project were effective with respect to this policy recommendation?
- How would you describe the policy assistance process?
- What can you say about the time frame (when and how long)?
- What can you say about the choice of stakeholders and arena (who and where)?
- How would you improve this process?
- What would you say about the expertise mobilized in this project (the extent to which experts played a key role based on their profile, network, experience, etc.)?
- Any comments on FAO's follow-up on the advice given after completion of the project?

IV. Preliminary findings and conclusions

- What could say about the follow-up provided to the policy assistance project?
- What are the policy recommendations that could be considered as original, if any?
- What would you say about possible synergies or contradictions among the policy recommendations provided by the policy assistance project?
- What preliminary lessons would you draw?
- What would you point out to improve the outcome of the policy recommendation analysed?

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The literature available on best practices for providing policy assistance and influencing effectively national policy processes is insufficient to provide appropriate guidance to those whose work it is to help countries in shaping their policies and ensure that the advice they provide has a good chance of being adopted by governments.

Based on these premises, this study, qualitative in nature, uses the results of a review of existing literature, a consultation with 25 agencies conducting policy assistance activities and an in-depth review of 12 FAO policy assistance projects to highlight a series of good practices that can contribute to enhancing the effectiveness of policy advisory activities. It shows that understanding the context within which policy assistance is provided, the process followed, the expertise mobilized and an effective and creative management are critical factors of influencing policy processes. It demonstrates the need for international and bilateral agencies to regard policy assistance in a new way: a knowledge-based activity where technical and analytical skills are necessary but not sufficient and need to be complemented by “soft” skills like facilitation and negotiation.

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