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PLAN OF ACTION FOR PEOPLE'S PARTICIPATION
IN RURAL DEVELOPMENT

I. INTRODUCTION

1. Over the past two decades, many governments, development agencies and non-governmental organizations have recognized that the "top-down" approach characteristic of traditional development strategies has largely failed to reach and benefit the rural poor. Pressed by a lack of resources, deteriorating terms of trade and mounting external debt repayments many governments are looking for alternative approaches to development. In this search, people's participation as a mechanism for promoting rural development is of paramount importance.

2. People's participation implies the active involvement in development of the rural people, particularly disadvantaged groups that form the mass of the rural population and have previously been excluded from the development process. The World Conference on Agrarian Reform and Rural Development (WCARRD) in 1979 affirmed that "participation by the people in the institutions and systems which govern their lives is a basic human right and also essential for realignment of political power in favour of disadvantaged groups and for social and economic development". FAO experience has shown that through participatory programmes and activities it is possible to mobilize local knowledge and resources for self-reliant development and, in the process, reduce the cost to governments of providing development assistance. People's participation is also recognized as an essential element in strategies for sustainable agriculture, since the rural environment can only be protected with the active collaboration of the local population.

3. People's participation should be viewed as an active process in which people take initiatives and action that is stimulated by their own thinking and deliberation and which they can effectively influence. Participation is therefore more than an instrument of implementing government projects. It is a development approach which recognizes the need to involve disadvantaged segments of the rural population in the design and implementation of policies concerning their well-being. While participatory approaches have been successful in many countries at stimulating self-help activities at the local level, they can and should also be followed in the design, implementation and evaluation of large-scale projects.

4. Since WCARRD the issue of people's participation has gained considerable momentum among governments, donor agencies and international organizations. The Declaration of Principles and Programme of Action adopted by WCARRD stimulated and guided a number of participatory FAO programmes, such as People's Participation in Agricultural and Rural Development through the Promotion of Self-Help Organizations (PPP), Community Action for Disadvantaged Rural Women (CADRW), Forestry for Local Community Development Programmes (FCLDP), the Forests, Trees and People Programme (FTPP), and the Programme for Small-Scale and Artisanal Fishermen. FAO's Medium and Long-Term Outlook for Food and Agricultural Development¹ approved by the Ninth Session of COAG and the Long-Term Strategy for the Food and Agriculture Sector² endorsed by the 98th Session of the Council recognized that rural development, and particularly rural poverty alleviation "can be achieved only with the voluntary and active participation of the rural people themselves". The Long-Term Strategy emphasizes that "policies must encourage the development of various forms of people's participation to overcome structural and other impediments". The ACC Task Force on Rural Development, of which FAO is the lead agency, established in 1981 a Panel on People's Participation. Its main achievements include encouragement and assistance to agencies in sensitizing staff in the issues related to people's participation and the publication of several studies on approaches to people's participation in rural development. The importance of people's participation has also been highlighted by UNDP in its Human Development Report 1990 which emphasizes that a participatory approach, including the involvement of NGOs, is crucial to any strategy for successful human development.

People's Participation, People's Organizations and Development NGOs

5. A close conceptual and operational link exists between people's participation and people's organizations. Active participation of rural people can only be brought about through local community and membership-based self-help organizations whose primary aim is the pursuit of their members' social or economic objectives. People's organizations are voluntary, autonomous and democratically controlled institutions including traditional community councils, informal groups, cooperatives, rural workers' organizations and peasant unions, women's associations, etc. Some local people's organizations may establish higher-level federations at provincial, national or international level in order to increase their self-help capacities and bargaining power, and to promote participatory development at local level. However, the vast majority of the rural population are still not organized in groups and are therefore not benefitting from the dynamics of such groups.

6. Participation through people's organizations is enhanced at local level through the work of development NGOs that aim at improving the social and economic conditions of rural people, especially the poor. Some development NGOs are membership-based, accountable to local associations which establish them, but the majority are not. The support they provide to grassroots groups takes various forms: training, technical support, research, assistance in formulating projects, exchange of information and experiences.

¹ COAG/87/4

² CL/98/13

7. NGO approaches to participation, geared to enhancing the self-reliance of people's organizations, are increasingly relevant when structural adjustment measures are obliging governments to cut back on state services. They help people's organizations to build up a substantive platform of awareness and initiatives on the basis of which they can participate meaningfully in planning and implementing government-promoted development programmes.

8. Over the past few years most governmental and multilateral development cooperation agencies have made serious efforts to strengthen their collaboration with the non-governmental sector, due in large part to a recognition of the relevance of NGO experience and the importance of their grassroots outreach. FAO established an NGO programme over 30 years ago, the Freedom from Hunger Campaign/Action for Development (FFHC/AD). Already in 1971 promoting people's participation in development was one of the main themes debated by NGOs associated with FAO at the Fifth FFHC/AD Conference. Over the intervening years, FFHC/AD has built up continuous working relations with NGOs and NGO networks in the South and a programme of support for their initiatives. At the same time, most FAO technical divisions and country offices have initiated collaboration with NGOs relevant to their areas of work. The establishment of World Food Day has given FAO an additional promotional instrument to do so.

II. BACKGROUND AND STRATEGY OF THE PLAN OF ACTION

9. In 1989, following requests from Member Governments and the Rome-based Group of International NGOs, the Committee on Agriculture (COAG)³ and the Council⁴ examined the issue of people's participation and its implication for FAO's activities in rural development. They recommended that the concept of participatory development be integrated into all development policies and programmes of FAO and also suggested that FAO develop a Plan of Action for People's Participation for discussion in due course by the FAO Council and Conference. A Plan of Action for People's Participation was therefore submitted to the 99th Session of the FAO Council, which broadly endorsed its objectives and the areas of action identified in it. The Council agreed that, in general, the Plan of Action constituted a suitable framework for future action and provided useful guidelines for interested governments to facilitate the process of people's participation. It stressed that the Plan of Action should fully recognize and respect the sovereignty of Member Governments. The view was also expressed that the Plan should be further elaborated and translated into concrete activities. The Council agreed that the Plan of Action should be revised taking into account the views expressed during the Council discussion and be submitted to the Twenty-sixth Session of the Conference for consideration and adoption. Accordingly a revised Plan of Action for People's Participation is submitted in the following paragraphs for consideration.

10. The overall aim of the Plan is to ensure active participation of people in the achievement of sustainable rural development. While it is recognized that other factors relating to social, economic/financial and technical aspects do play an important role in achieving this objective,

³ 10th Session of COAG, May 1989.

⁴ 95th Session of the FAO Council, June 1989.

the active participation of rural people, including disadvantaged groups, acting through voluntary, self-reliant organizations of their own choice is equally important. Without such participation, rural development initiatives are unlikely to be sustainable in the long run and rural inequities are unlikely to be redressed.

11. It should be recognized that the policy decision and responsibility for formulating and implementing participatory development policies and approaches rest with the governments of individual member countries. Hence, the policies and programmes for people's participation envisaged in the follow-up to the Plan of Action must fully recognize and respect the sovereignty of Member Governments.

12. The promotion of people's participation in rural development can be operationalized if certain conditions are met, namely:

- (a) that general public awareness exists of the benefits of using participatory approaches to rural development, and that key policy and decision-makers within government and other development agencies take action in this area;
- (b) that the legal and policy environment existing within the country is favourable to the participatory, collective self-help initiatives of rural people, especially the disadvantaged; and
- (c) that the self-management capacities of rural people's organizations are sufficient to sustain such initiatives.

13. Policy advice and technical assistance to Member Governments aimed at facilitating the decentralization of public administration decision-making will be critically important in the creation of more favourable legal and policy conditions for people's participation. The development of new, more flexible and participatory administrative and operational procedures and methodologies for implementing participatory rural development actions and supporting local organizations will likewise be important. Furthermore, the design and implementation of new tools and mechanisms for monitoring and evaluating people's participation and for improving dialogue among people's organizations, government, NGOs and other development agencies on people's participation issues will be essential in building greater public awareness and understanding of the benefits of participatory rural development approaches.

14. In order to achieve the goal of sustainable rural development with equity through people's participation, the Plan proposes that action be taken in the following seven areas:

- (a) Promotion of greater public awareness of the role of people's participation and people's organizations in agricultural and rural development;
- (b) Creation of favourable legal and policy framework for people's participation;
- (c) Strengthening internal capacities of the rural people's organizations at local and national levels;

- (d) Decentralization of government decision-making;
- (e) Promotion of increased dialogue and technical collaboration between governments, development agencies and people's organizations;
- (f) Introduction of appropriate operational procedures and methods to facilitate wider participation;
- (g) Monitoring and evaluation of people's participation.

15. Action proposed in each of these areas is outlined in the following sections. Each section begins with a summary description of central issues and problems, followed by specific recommendations for consideration by Member Governments and FAO.

III. ACTION AREAS

- (a) Promotion of greater public awareness of the role of people's participation and people's organizations in agricultural and rural development

Issues:

16. Achieving sustainable rural development and environmental protection requires the cooperation of large, sometimes diverse populations residing within specific ecological areas. Such cooperation can be enhanced through the voluntary and cooperative action and participation of all sectors of the rural population, including women and other disadvantaged groups.

17. Full recognition of the inherent advantages of people's participation in mobilizing rural communities for sustainable agriculture and rural development is an essential first step. Many key decision-makers need to be informed about and convinced of the intrinsic benefits that flow from enhanced people's participation in development programmes and projects.

Proposals for Action:

18. For Governments:

- (i) Create greater awareness among government officials of the benefits of adopting participatory approaches in order to reach rural people.
- (ii) Establish clear government policies and regulations for the training of government officials in the principles, practice and benefits of people's participation in development.
- (iii) Apply communication methods and materials, to be used by government staff and people's organizations, in the promotion of people's participation and in the sharing of knowledge and skills.

- (iv) In order to reach all sectors of the rural population utilize a variety of organizational modalities, such as small informal groups, traditional community associations, cooperatives, unions, etc.
- (v) Mobilize rural communities to achieve sustainable rural development objectives using participatory approaches, acting through existing or through new rural people's organizations.
- (vi) Ensure that mobilization activities are focused on satisfying community needs and produce tangible benefits for those involved.

19. For FAO:

- (i) Conduct case studies and research on the effectiveness of participatory approaches and people's organizations in mobilizing rural communities for sustainable agricultural and rural development and environmental protection.
 - (ii) Assist governments in testing the effectiveness of different organizational methodologies for mobilizing rural communities, satisfying community-identified needs and producing tangible benefits for those involved.
 - (iii) Collect and disseminate to Member Governments, NGOs, other people's organizations and the general public information materials on examples of people's participation activities, approaches adopted and performance and benefits.
 - (iv) Develop informational training materials on participatory rural development project design, monitoring and evaluation in order to enhance among concerned FAO technical staff, the awareness of people's participation issues and to assist in the integration of people's participation elements into FAO programmes and projects.
 - (v) Assist governments in developing new training approaches aimed at sensitizing key government and development agency decision-makers to the merits and value of using more participatory approaches in rural development.
 - (vi) Through the World Food Day Network, mobilize governments and NGOs for the creation of a positive attitude towards people's participation.
- (b) Creation of favourable legal and policy conditions for people's participation

Issues:

20. Legal and administrative frameworks should encourage the free association of rural people, thus enabling them to participate in the development process. Legislation which restricts the rights of individuals to freely organize themselves into participatory self-help organizations to pursue their own economic interests and gain access to land, inputs, markets and services can constitute a serious obstacle to participation.

21. Likewise, national economic policies in many countries, especially those affecting the pricing and distribution of agricultural inputs and the pricing and marketing of farm production, credit services, taxation and revenue-sharing, should not discourage or penalize rural savings and investment. Laws which recognize the rights of rural people to establish new autonomous economic organizations serving their needs or which give authority to local governments to spend locally generated tax revenues can foster local initiatives in support of people's participation.

22. The vital role women play in socio-economic life and in both agricultural and non-agricultural activities must be adequately recognized in rural development planning and programme implementation. Rural development based on growth with equity and people's participation will therefore require full integration of women, including promoting their equal access to natural resources and services, equal rights to inheritance and equal opportunity to develop and employ their skills.

Proposals for Action:

23. For Governments:

- (i) Establish clear government policies and regulations that favour people's participation and encourage the establishment of people's organizations. Towards this end, establish a legal framework which provides a basis for free association of rural people in organizations of their choice.
- (ii) Introduce and enforce policies and legal and structural reforms (such as land reform, reform of tenancy laws, water use rights, etc.) which promote more equitable access to resources and services for the rural population, especially the rural poor.
- (iii) Enact and amend laws to ensure equal rights and full membership for women and other disadvantaged groups in people's organizations.
- (iv) Reform or, where necessary, create, local government institutions to promote and facilitate democratic participation of rural people through organizations of their choice.

24. For FAO:

- (i) Encourage and assist governments in establishing a legal framework to provide for free association of rural people in organizations of their choice.
- (ii) Promote the introduction and implementation of policies and of legal and structural reforms (such as land reform, reform of tenancy laws, water use rights, etc.) that promote more equitable access to resources for the rural population, especially the rural poor.

- (iii) Assist governments in the design, implementation and evaluation of policies to promote more equitable access to resources, inputs and services by rural people, especially women and other disadvantaged groups.
 - (iv) Assist governments in the design and implementation of improved pricing, credit and taxation/fiscal policies and incentives which encourage greater participation by rural people in savings and investment and in the functioning of domestic markets.
- (c) Strengthening internal capacities of the rural people's organizations at local and national levels

Issues:

25. Experience in both the developed and developing countries has shown that the existence of active people's organizations is essential for the success of participatory approaches to rural development. Government efforts therefore must focus on promoting and strengthening the growth of self-reliant rural organizations so that they can serve as channels for the delivery of government development services to the rural population and participate effectively in the design, implementation and monitoring/evaluation of development activities.

26. In order to promote voluntary rural people's organizations pursuing their members' interests, rural development policies may need to be re-oriented. The lack of trained managers and local leaders of people's organizations directly affects their ability to achieve self-sufficiency goals and frequently leads to loss of funds, confidence and motivation.

Proposals for Action:

27. For Governments:

- (i) Introduce policies to facilitate the transformation of government-sponsored and government-financed people's organizations, especially cooperatives, into self-reliant, member-controlled and financially autonomous organizations.
- (ii) Promote the use of new "bottom-up" approaches to building rural organizations, e.g., through informal group formation as a complementary approach to existing government efforts.
- (iii) Strengthen training programmes for leaders, managers and members of people's organizations in order to reinforce management and technical capacities.
- (iv) Establish self-control mechanisms, audit services and modes of financing which strengthen self-reliance capacity of people's organizations.
- (v) Encourage the mobilization of local member resources (member savings, share capital, labour contributions, etc.) to finance people's organization activities and growth.

- (vi) Limit the external financing of people's organizations to the minimum amount necessary and to a mutually agreed time frame so that it does not undermine their independence and self-reliance.

28. For FAO:

- (i) Advise governments on the design and implementation of long term strategies for the gradual transformation of government-sponsored and financed people's organizations (especially cooperatives) into self-reliant, member-controlled and member-financed organizations.
- (ii) Encourage governments to adopt approaches to financing local people's organizations which place primary importance on assisting them in achieving financial self-reliance and make minimum use of grants and subsidies.
- (iii) Assist governments in developing effective approaches for building the internal capital base of local people's organizations through increase in member savings and share contributions and accumulation of operating surpluses.
- (iv) Assist governments in strengthening the self-management, self-help capacities of rural people's organization leadership as well as membership, through special training of trainers programmes, etc.
- (v) Assist governments in developing appropriate accounting, business management and financial self-sufficiency methodologies for strengthening the internal self-help capacities of rural people's organizations.

(d) Decentralization of government decision-making

Issues:

29. Decentralized systems of public administration and government decision-making encourage local initiatives and participation at the local level. Rural people are more likely to support development initiatives when these take into consideration the views and the expressed needs of the intended beneficiaries. The promotion of people's participation depends to a great extent on the delegation to local levels of the responsibility for decision-making, including for raising revenues and incurring expenditures.

30. The effective delegation of decision-making to local levels also requires the existence or establishment of appropriate mechanisms for facilitating increased dialogue and collaboration between governments, development agencies and local people's organizations. Where these mechanisms are in place, decentralization efforts are more effective.

Proposals for Action:

31. For Governments:

- (i) Introduce changes in administrative and budgetary procedures which facilitate the delegation of authority and responsibility to local levels for decision-making, revenue raising and spending.
- (ii) Establish local consultative, advisory and planning bodies composed of people's organizations, NGOs and government representatives to assist government in the decentralization of decision-making.
- (iii) Develop new accounting, local oversight and control mechanisms which facilitate decentralized decision-making.

32. For FAO:

- (i) Assist Member Governments in decentralizing decision-making within the framework of national policy to promote greater participation of rural people in the formulation, implementation and evaluation of rural development programmes and projects that affect them.
 - (ii) Analyse the political, economic and fiscal impact of different forms of decentralization so as to assist governments in developing strategies aimed at delegating increased decision-making, revenue-raising and spending authority to local levels.
 - (iii) Advise governments on measures for increasing the participation of rural people, especially women and other disadvantaged groups, in the rural development planning process.
- (e) Promotion of increased dialogue and technical collaboration between governments, development agencies and people's organizations

Issues:

33. In many developing countries governments, development agencies and NGOs are often involved in different ways in promoting and supporting village community groups and people's organizations representing the rural poor. Promoting exchange of information and dialogue between all parties can help collaboration in participatory development at local level. Many governments in developing countries are seeking solutions to this problem by encouraging greater dialogue with NGOs.

34. With the help of FAO, World Bank and UNDP, NGOs in some developing countries have recently established collaborative mechanisms such as umbrella organizations or coalitions which bring together international and national professional voluntary development agencies, donor NGOs and people's organizations. These umbrella organizations or NGO networks, have

become important supporting institutions for information exchange and provision of training for leaders of people's organizations at the country level and for promoting dialogue and collaboration with government and donor agencies on policy issues in rural development.

Proposals for Action:

35. For Governments:

- (i) Establish multi-institutional mechanisms, coordinating or advisory bodies, etc. at national and local levels within and between line ministries in agriculture, agrarian reform and rural development, which facilitate a dialogue and collaboration with NGOs, people's organizations on policies, programmes and projects to promote participatory development.
- (ii) Facilitate legally, administratively, and technically, the establishment of umbrella organizations of NGOs representing and servicing rural people's organizations.
- (iii) Enable the participation of representatives from people's organizations in national and local level training activities related to information exchange, policy dialogue and design and implementation of participatory rural development projects.

36. For FAO:

- (i) Assist governments in the establishment of multi-institutional mechanisms at national and at decentralized levels to facilitate information exchange, dialogue and collaboration between government, NGOs and people's organizations in promoting participatory rural development programmes and projects.
- (ii) Facilitate NGOs and people's organizations in developing countries to establish and/or strengthen umbrella organizations or coalitions as a platform for information exchange and for policy dialogue on participatory rural development with the government and development agencies concerned.
- (iii) Encourage the establishment of institutional arrangements which promote closer dialogue between international donor NGOs and national NGOs involved in supporting development and people's participation at local level.
- (iv) Establish appropriate modalities to facilitate closer dialogue and technical collaboration with NGOs on people's participation and rural development matters.
- (v) Encourage participation by representatives of local organizations together with government officials, in workshops, expert meetings, consultations and conferences on rural development policies, procedures, programmes and projects.

(f) Introduction of appropriate operational procedures and methods

Issues:

37. The effective promotion of people's participation requires the development of appropriate operational methods and decentralized mechanisms which facilitate wider participation of the rural population in the formulation, design, implementation and evaluation of rural development policies, programmes and project activities. Moreover, research on people's participation and on the education and training of promoters of participation or of the beneficiaries themselves needs to take into account the local needs, skill levels and experiences of the rural people concerned.

Proposals for Action:

38. For Governments:

- (i) Establish appropriate administrative procedures and financial arrangements at local levels to enhance the establishment and activities of informal and formal groupings of the rural people and their participation in development activities.
- (ii) Introduce more participatory methodologies which permit rural people to play a more active role in identifying their research and technical assistance needs, in designing research and training approaches and in monitoring progress and evaluating results.

39. For FAO:

- (i) Develop operational procedures and measures that facilitate participation of people's organizations in rural development activities, including arrangements for their implementation of certain project components.
- (ii) Assist governments in establishing mechanisms to facilitate collaboration with NGOs and farmers in the development of participatory methodologies for research, education, training and extension in agricultural and rural development.
- (iii) Develop project design guidelines that encourage, to the maximum extent possible, the incorporation of people's participation and people's organization-building objectives in relevant FAO project activities.
- (iv) Encourage closer technical cooperation and exchange of information between all FAO technical units involved in the implementation of participatory rural development programmes and projects.

(g) Monitoring and evaluation of people's participation

Issues:

40. The lack of reliable information on people's participation issues constitutes a major constraint to rural development policy-makers and

planners at national and international levels and frequently leads to an incorrect assessment of the development needs of rural people and their organizations as well as a sub-optimal use of resources destined for that sector. These inadequacies also make it difficult for governments, development agencies and people's organizations themselves to properly measure progress achieved in improving levels of rural people's participation and people's organization performance.

Proposals for Action:

41. For Governments:

- (i) Establish appropriate mechanisms for collecting, processing and disseminating data on people's participation and people's organizations on a systematic and regular basis so as to assist in policy formulation and decision-making.
- (ii) Develop participatory monitoring and evaluation systems to assess progress in people's participatory approaches to rural and agricultural development.
- (iii) Assess periodically the overall effects of policies to enhance people's participation to determine whether further improvements are needed to ensure progress.

42. For FAO:

- (i) Assist governments in collecting, processing and disseminating information on people's participation, using indicators adapted to the specific nature of different types of people's organizations.
- (ii) Assist governments in providing training to the staff of governments and people's organizations in the collection of data and in the development of participatory monitoring and evaluation systems.
- (iii) Assist governments in preparation of case studies to examine trends in people's participation in rural and agricultural development.
- (iv) Continue with the assistance of Member Governments to monitor progress in rural development and people's participation as part of its regular WCARRD reporting, using socio-economic indicators developed for this purpose.

IV. IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PLAN OF ACTION

(a) General

43. It must be recognized that the objective of active participation by the people in the development process can be achieved only through consistent and concentrated efforts over a long period. The implementation of the Plan of Action will therefore call for both long-term policies and adequate resources. In laying a secure foundation for people's participation, the process is extremely important as also the creation of voluntary and democratic people's organizations. By its very nature, the

process of promoting people's participation is complex. It often involves fundamental socio-economic changes which require long-term policy and resource commitment to the objective of promoting people's participation for improving the economic and social conditions of the rural people, and particularly of the poor.

44. The resources needed for moving on the path of sustained people's participation must not be underestimated; nor should the long-term benefits flowing from a people-centred, equitable and sustained growth process. It is obvious that the primary responsibility for implementing the policies, programmes and activities advocated in the Plan of Action rests with individual member countries. An essential first step in the implementation of the Plan is for each country to determine clearly defined and time-bound targets and set priorities, taking into account its own specific conditions and capacities, in respect of the programmes suggested in each of the seven areas of the Plan of Action. The determination of these targets will also involve the estimation of the required resources.

(b) FAO's role in support of the Plan of Action

45. FAO can - and will need to - play an important role in the implementation of the Plan of Action and to provide technical and financial support to interested countries in this task at their request. The Plan envisages FAO acting as a catalyst and an advocate to encourage and assist governments and people's organizations in promoting participatory activities. In this context, FAO will provide assistance through its own Regular Programme and through its Field Programme using the traditional instruments of development intervention, i.e. information gathering, analysis and dissemination, training, institution building, promotion of dialogue, exchange of experience, as well as policy advice.

46. The actions envisaged for FAO in the seven areas of the Plan of Action would provide a broad framework for the technical programmes of FAO in support of participatory activities. While it is not feasible to provide information on all current FAO programmes which support people's participation, a selection of the most relevant programmes gives an indication of the wide scope of ongoing and planned FAO activities which promote this approach.

47. The sub-programme 2.1.5.3, Rural Institutions and Employment, deals primarily and directly with policies, research and training related to rural institution-building and the strengthening of associations of small farmers through cooperatives or informal groups. The activities under this sub-programme provide technical support to Small Farmer Development (SFDP)/People's participation Programmes (PPP), and aim at the integration of participatory principles into large-scale projects and programmes. Under this sub-programme, FAO recently published a manual entitled "Participation and Practice" based on over ten years of SFDP/PPP field experience, which provides useful guidelines for promoting and implementing participatory field projects. Future actions planned for the 1992-93 biennium for promoting greater public awareness for people's participation (action area a), include the preparation of country case studies on the effectiveness of participatory experiences within the agricultural, rural development, forestry and fisheries sectors. It is

also proposed to undertake more in-depth, long-term impact assessments of people's participation projects which highlight the benefits of participation such as those currently underway in Lesotho and Thailand.

48. Future planned actions under sub-programme 2.1.5.3, which aim at creating favourable legal and policy conditions for people's participation (action area b), involve the provision of assistance to member countries in the redrafting of their legislation governing cooperative and other people's organizations. Such assistance has already been provided to Ethiopia and Grenada and Iran has expressed interest in this matter.

49. As regards the strengthening of internal capacities of the rural people's organizations at local and national levels (action area c), FAO has a programme to advise Member Governments on the design and implementation of long-term strategies for the gradual transformation of government initiated cooperatives into self-reliant, member-controlled and member-financed organizations. Such assistance is currently being provided to Ethiopia, Burkina Faso and Mongolia. Further, a detailed analysis of the 25 country studies on the state of the art of cooperative movements throughout the world is now underway, which will strengthen the basis for future policy advice to Member Governments on the re-organization of cooperatives. With a view to strengthening the self-help and self-help management capacities of rural people's organizations, a "Guide to Bookkeeping and Accounting in Agricultural Cooperatives" has been developed.

50. With regard to promoting decentralization of government decision-making (action area d) FAO, under programme element 2.1.8.5.03 "Decentralized Planning and Analysis" will assist member countries in conducting national in-service training programmes for government officers working at local level and members of peasant associations. In particular, assistance will be provided to local planners to enhance their planning capability in the use of analytical tools and methodologies through direct assistance and training with the purpose of strengthening local planning institutions, developing financial resource allocation procedures, enhancing private business and people's participation in development. Country studies are proposed to be carried out in the next biennium in Ethiopia, Ghana, Uganda, Zambia, Rwanda, Senegal and Mexico. In addition, case study and methodological materials will be prepared on the basis of the work initiated in the preparation of the publication "Rural Area Development Planning: Principles, Approaches and Tools of Economic Analysis".

51. Another important area under sub-programme 2.1.5.3 Rural institutions and Employment, is the promotion of increased dialogue and technical collaboration between governments, development agencies and people's organizations (action area e). Towards this end, FAO has helped in the organization of national tripartite consultations in which representatives of governments, NGOs and donors participate. FAO has conducted such a tripartite consultation in the Philippines and one is planned in Jamaica. FAO is prepared to respond to requests from Member Governments for organizing such consultations. FAO also assists NGOs and people's organizations in developing countries to establish and/or strengthen regional and national umbrella organizations or coalitions (networks) as a platform for information exchange and policy dialogue. An example is FAO's assistance in establishing the Asian NGO Coalition (ANGOC).

52. Activities under sub-programme 1.4.1.2 "Non-governmental Organizations" also relate to action area e. This sub-programme aims at developing closer relations with a range of non-governmental organizations and promotion of collaboration with FFHC/AD initiatives in strengthening regional NGO networks in the Latin American and African regions is noteworthy. During the 1992/93 biennium FFHC/AD will build up a comprehensive database on NGOs of relevance to FAO's mandate, undertake a systematic assessment of NGO experience in sustainable rural development, and building on its existing activities, promote catalytic FAO/NGO field projects which can serve as a laboratory for evolving alternative, participatory solutions to development problems.

53. With regard to the introduction of appropriate operational procedures and methods (action area f) FAO has developed procedures to facilitate increased delegation of authority and responsibility to national implementing agencies (including NGOs) in the execution of FAO participatory projects. Future actions for developing appropriate operational procedures and methods will include the development of field-designed and tested participatory training materials in such subjects as group enterprise management, mobilization of member capital for investment and group formation and development for use at local levels.

54. FAO will continue to monitor and evaluate people's participation (action area g), as part of its regular WCARRD reporting. In order to facilitate such monitoring, it is proposed to collect more detailed information on member participation in rural cooperatives and other organizations. FAO will also continue to participate actively in the Panels on People's Participation and on Monitoring and Evaluation of the AAC Task Force on Rural Development, which recently held a joint meeting to discuss participatory monitoring and evaluation. It was agreed that FAO would contribute its experience to prepare a revised edition of the Panel's widely used publication "Guiding Principles for the Design and Use of Monitoring and Evaluation in Rural Development Projects and Programmes".

55. Participatory elements are included in many other activities, such as in the development of sustainable farming systems, irrigation management, soil conservation, integrated dairy development, forestry extension and public education as well as community forest development and fishermen's organizations.

56. The principles of people's participation have been applied in many FAO field activities. FAO was implementing, in early 1991, 145 participatory rural development projects with a value of around US\$ 345 million, while forty more such projects were in the pipeline. A good example of a large-scale FAO field project with a strong participatory orientation is the regional Integrated Pest Management (IPM) project. This project applies group-based and participatory approaches and has trained over 400 000 farmers to diagnose symptoms, analyse their agro-ecosystems and to decide what to do without waiting passively for extension advice. The farmers are now able to treat their crops in a way which is environmentally and economically sound, generating savings from lower pesticide use levels of over US\$ 10 million per year.

57. People's participation is also a key element of the Tropical Forestry Action Plan (TFAP). TFAP guidelines stress that governments and aid agencies must strengthen participatory forestry mechanisms and

facilitate the involvement of local people and NGOs in the TFAP process. The proposed activities, which will be coordinated with other FAO initiatives such as Forest, Trees and People, include: the undertaking of country-level inventories or organizations actively involved in forestry and rural development; an assessment of the potential of each organization to facilitate effective public participation in TFAP; the identification of appropriate public participation mechanisms for the country; the translation into local languages of TFAP documents; the strengthening of selected local organizations through, for example, the training of staff in participatory forestry; and the use of qualified representatives from local NGOs as TFAP consultants.

58. The policy of the FAO Fisheries Department is guided by the Strategy for Fisheries Management and Development adopted by the 1984 FAO World Fisheries Conference. The Strategy and the related Programmes of Action place particular emphasis on the active participation of fishing communities in the planning and implementation of development and management schemes. Various activities have been implemented under the regular and field programmes to strengthen the collaboration with NGOs and to promote the closer involvement of fisherfolk organizations in development and management efforts; examples include credit and women extension services implemented by the Bay of Bengal Programme and schemes for improved fish marketing and social services undertaken by the Project for the Integrated Development of Artisanal Fisheries in West Africa. In view of the fact that many inshore fisheries resources are heavily exploited, the close participation of fisherfolk in fisheries management is essential. In this connection, a trust fund project has been approved in 1991 to study and promote the concept of community-based fishery management systems in Asia. People's participation in fisheries and coastal resources management will also be a key component of the next phase of the Bay of Bengal Programme and of a UNDP interregional programme on integrated coastal fisheries management that is to commence in 1992.

59. Communication is also an essential element in participatory development programmes. FAO has over twenty years of experience in promoting the use of communication methods and media to establish a dialogue among all the actors concerned in the development process, and particularly with the rural people; to involve communities in the planning, implementation and monitoring of development programmes; to provide information as a basis for change and innovation; and to help with the sharing of knowledge and skills. Development Support Communication field programmes will continue to apply communication techniques and media to facilitate knowledge sharing and, through dialogue, open the door to the participation of rural people in situation analysis, development planning, management and decision-making. An example of a project that successfully uses communication for improved participation is the rural communication system established in Mexico to support the integrated development of the Tropical Wetlands (Proderith). Communication media and approaches are applied to reach a consensus with local communities concerning the development actions to be taken and to plan and implement local development programmes. But, most important, the rural communication system is now being decentralized and transferred to the farmers' associations themselves. Communication materials are being produced by the farmers, with the farmers, and for the farmers. This unique experience can be a model for other developing countries. Another field programme which will include communication to increase people's participation is the

Forest, Trees and People programme. A communication component will apply traditional and low-cost communication media to involve people in the planning, implementation and evaluation of community forestry programmes. The results of this interregional programme will be made available to governments and NGOs through audio-visual media, publications and case studies.

60. The Investment Centre has been helping to introduce people's participatory components in projects prepared for financing agencies, especially the World Bank, IFAD, the African Development Bank and the Asian Development Bank. In recent work, the Investment Centre has given increasing attention to promoting people's participation in the design of projects so as to ensure that the felt needs of the intended beneficiaries are properly addressed in project interventions. Using Rapid Rural Appraisal methodologies, project design teams have focused on means of developing a convergence between beneficiary and Government views on project design and on identifying institutional mechanisms which ensure an equitable distribution of benefits within the affected communities.

61. People's participation is also an important component of the proposed International Cooperative Programme Framework for Sustainable Agriculture and Rural Development (ICPF/SARD) which will be discussed at the 26th Session of the FAO Conference. This framework is based on the Den Bosch Declaration and Agenda for Action for SARD and foresees under Programme No. 2 "People's Participation and Development of Human Resources" four priority goals, i.e.:

- the development of decentralization policies for rural development;
- the concurrent adjustment of institutional structures;
- the development of rural organizations and of the interactive processes with government institutions;
- the development of human resources for the above purposes,

all of which are completely compatible with the aims of the Plan of Action.

62. While the principles of participatory approaches to rural development will involve many technical units of FAO, the overall responsibility for monitoring the implementation of the Plan of Action and for periodic reporting would be vested with the Human Resources, Institutions and Agrarian Reform Division. In this task the Division will be assisted by a Sub-Group on People's Participation of the Inter-Divisional Working Group on Rural Development. In implementing the Plan, FAO will collaborate closely with other UN agencies which are members of the ACC Task Force on Rural Development, which is chaired by FAO.

63. FAO has thus been providing technical assistance, supported by extra-budgetary resources, to government programmes in the areas covered by the Plan of Action. FAO's technical assistance would aim at promoting people's organizations - both formal and informal - as essential

instruments for promoting participatory activities, and also at introducing well-defined components for promoting people's participation in larger development projects in the field of agriculture, fisheries and forestry.

(c) The role of the international community

64. Last but not least, it should be stressed that although the actions envisaged in the Plan of Action are addressed to the member countries which wish to promote people's participation, their implementation crucially depends also on the availability of external funds for development. The very restricted and diminishing resource position of many developing countries, as well as their high external indebtedness are likely to hinder progress in promoting a people's participatory development process. In this context, the international community can make a critically important contribution by providing external resources in support of the implementation of the Plan. Necessary adjustments in the area of international trade, external debt and the flow of financial resources can also facilitate the generation of the will and commitment for achieving the objectives of the Plan.

65. The Conference may wish to consider the above Plan of Action for People's Participation for adoption.