



ORGANISATION  
DES  
NATIONS  
UNIES  
POUR  
L'ALIMENTATION  
ET  
L'AGRICULTURE

FOOD  
AND  
AGRICULTURE  
ORGANIZATION  
OF  
THE  
UNITED  
NATIONS

ORGANIZACIÓN  
DE LAS  
NACIONES  
UNIDAS  
PARA LA  
AGRICULTURA  
Y LA  
ALIMENTACIÓN

DIVISION DU DÉVELOPPEMENT RURAL  
DIVISION DE DESARROLLO RURAL  
DIVISION DE DÉVELOPPEMENT RURAL  
DIVISION DE DÉVELOPPEMENT RURAL

# FAO EXPERIENCES ON DECENTRALIZED RURAL DEVELOPMENT

DÉCENTRALISATION ET DÉVELOPPEMENT RURAL  
DECENTRALIZATION AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT  
DESCENTRALIZACIÓN Y DESARROLLO RURAL

**Massive recent withdrawal by the State** (privatization, deregulation and finance policies of restricted public spending) initially fuelled a large-scale reduction in public institutions' intervention capacity and, in rural development terms, triggered a contraction in the public institutions which had been furnishing agricultural services, the down-scaling or abolishment of subsidies and the privatization of certain agricultural support services. **Rural development institutions, therefore, are engaged in a restructuring process of equally massive proportions.** Decentralization and the transfer of operational functions and certain support services to intermediate and local government levels, producer organizations and civil institutions, form a key facet of these developments. **State withdrawal has created a window of opportunity for other rural development agents to undertake action.**

The present report commences by presenting a study carried out by FAO on the risks associated with processes of decentralization. An account is then provided of the valuable knowledge-base and experience which FAO has built up, which places it in a position to propose appropriate ways of responding to such risks. Identification of the latter and of FAO's valuable advantages makes it possible, finally, to put forward a decentralization model (RED-IFO) based on a methodology of regionalization and differentiation and three associated policies: information, training and organization.

This document is the result of concertation with several units within FAO and working sessions of Issue-Group IG-1 (Rural Institutions and Participation Service) with Gustavo Gordillo, Jean Bonnal, Mohamed Tayeb Nadir and Tomas Lindemann. Synthesis and redaction has been prepared by Rafael Paniagua, Consultant.

Rome, November 1997



## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>THE RISKS OF DECENTRALIZATION</b>	<b>4</b>
1. Substitution of a supply philosophy by a demand philosophy	6
2. Informational imbalances do not facilitate activity co-ordination	6
3. The legacy of paternalism may lead to a poorer supply of support services	6
4. The clientelist tradition creates the risk of appropriation	6
5. Institutional rigidity and the pace of decentralization	7
<b>FAO'S KEY ADVANTAGES: KNOWLEDGE AND EXPERIENCE</b>	<b>8</b>
1. Focus on public institutions	9
A) The agricultural production systems approach: the role of surveys and typologies in dialogue between the State and rural populations	11
B) The role of training for decentralized development planning and management	12
C) Restructuring of agricultural support services	15
2. Focus on civil society	21
A) Promotion of land management projects and contractual links between local communities and the State	23
B) Extension policy within the participatory approach	27
C) Popular participation programs and structuring peasant organizations	30
3. Focus on local government levels	36
A) Local government levels in a decentralization process	39
B) The capacity of local government levels to become true poles of rural development	42
C) The building of interfaces between national and local levels of government	43
<b>THE RED-IFO DECENTRALISATION MODEL</b>	<b>45</b>
1. Decentralization methodology: demand regionalization and policy differentiation (RED)	45
2. Support policies: information, training and organization (IFO)	46
A) The role of access to information in dialog with the State	46
B) Training as a means of avoiding institutional vacuums	47
C) Organization and mediation mechanisms	47
<b>LINKS BETWEEN DECENTRALIZATION AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT</b>	<b>49</b>
1. Conclusions and recommendations	49
2. Directions for pursuing analysis of and research into decentralization and its links with rural development	51
<b>Bibliography</b>	<b>49</b>
<b>Footnotes</b>	<b>57</b>



## **DEFINITIONS**

- 1. Decentralization** means the process whereby government institutions transfer decision-making powers and resources closer both to the target populations of public policy and to all protagonists in civil society, in the context of the re-definition of the role of the State, deregulation and privatization. Essentially decentralization can take three forms:
- 2. Deconcentration** to regional and/or local levels (for example, a Ministry which transfers some of its activities and legal powers to its regional and/or local units). Such a transfer fundamentally constitutes administrative decentralization in that it does not really involve a shift in decision-making power but only in "some administrative responsibilities from the central government to the regional, zonal and district level government offices, retaining all powers of control and authority with the centre" (IV4, p. 3).
- 3. Delegation** of functions to regional semi-public bodies (for example a Ministry transferring some of its activities and legal powers to regional and specialist agencies). Delegation consists of "assigning some tasks to the lower level. It implies that the central government creates or transfers to an agency or administrative level certain specified functions and duties, which the latter has broad discretion to carry out. The agencies may or may not be under the direct control of the central government (but) indirect control is implied in delegation" (IV4,p. 4).
- 4. Devolution** of functions and resources to the populations themselves or to local government levels (transfer to organizations representative of populations or to municipalities, village authorities or rural communities). Devolution "involves creating or strengthening independent levels or units of government through transfer of functions and authority from the central government. The local units of government to which functions and authority are devolved would be mostly autonomous, with the central authority only exercising indirect, supervisory control over them" (IV4, p. 5). Devolution is the most advanced form of decentralization since it implies a transfer of power to a local institution or association which enjoys a high level of autonomy. Popular participation in the decision-making process is most important in this type of decentralization.

Evidently decentralization is simply a general process covering all spheres of government action, and its particular conditions for success need to be specified for each branch of the economy. However, this report deals exclusively with conditions for decentralization in relation to State rural development action. In the context of the legacy of centralized policies, the State's retrenchment and, in particular, decentralization, carry a number of risks which FAO's experience in the field has contributed to identifying. There are five decisive legacy/risk pairs:

## RISKS OF DECENTRALIZATION

### 1. Substitution of a supply philosophy by a demand philosophy

Centralised policies were guided by a **pure supply philosophy**: a global development strategy which did not take specific local conditions into account. Lack of mechanisms which would make it possible to adjust the instruments to suit the specific problems of each region, branch or type of producer.

- There is a risk that governments will be tempted to base their intervention approach on a **pure demand philosophy**, which would have the merit of taking account of the particular circumstances of each locality or type of producer, but the disadvantage that action would be diluted and that **an overall philosophy to guide the definition of rural development strategies would be lost.**

The lack of an overall philosophy can be particularly serious since the sum of local solutions does not necessarily provide an overall solution to the problem of rural development, or higher and more stable levels of investment, employment and production.

### 2. Informational imbalances do not facilitate activity co-ordination

When intervention is centralized, information is not distributed in a symmetric fashion, but is concentrated at central government levels

- There is a risk that rural populations are unable to gain a general view of their demands and specific problems and co-ordinate their activities.

There is a strong possibility that local development strategies, albeit grounded in a solid knowledge of conditions surrounding each problem at local level, may not be consistent with a regional philosophy and, even more, with the global development model. Decentralization, therefore, provides insufficient possibilities for popular participation, and the conditions for such participation must be created.

### 3. The legacy of paternalism may lead to a poorer supply of support services

The tenet of centralized policies is that State intervention alone is able to correct market weaknesses and make it possible to advance towards development. This paternalistic development approach **hinders the capacity for autonomous action and initiative of both rural populations and local government levels.**

- If the relocation of functions is not accompanied by a transfer of legal power, decentralization can produce institutional vacuums, a **reduction in the supply of support services and a widening** of income disparities between urban and rural areas.

#### 4. The clientelist tradition creates the risk of appropriation

Under centralized policies resources were allocated in ways that sustained State **clienteles which had a greater capacity to formulate their needs clearly and coherently in terms of projects and programs, as well as a level of organization that allowed them to lobby the State to obtain the lion's share of public expenditure on rural development.**

---

- The imbalance in the organizational levels of rural populations creates the risk of an **appropriation of the functions and resources transferred under decentralization** by the richest, best organized municipalities and organizations.

---

In addition, the absence of strong, representative intermediate regional associations may diminish regional conflict-mediation capacity **tilting it in favor of local powers which are less concerned with leading a global development strategy based on mediation and consultations.**

#### 5. Institutional rigidity and the pace of decentralization

Intermediate and local levels of centralized institutions were devised for the implementation of policies for whose definition they were not responsible. They are, therefore, characterised by a degree of **inflexibility in terms of adapting to a changing environment and taking account of the new conditions under which participatory, decentralized policies are formulated.**

Decentralization may lead to the paralysis of intermediate and local levels of government as well as of producer organizations, which are unable to assume the challenges posed by decentralization policy.

---

- It is risky to think that it is simply enough **to pass a decentralization law to ensure the latter's immediate, consistent implementation.**

---

On the contrary, it is necessary to ponder the question of the **desired pace** of decentralization: it should not be too swift, to allow for adaptation, nor too slow, in order to allow the decentralization process to forge ahead.

⇒ The knowledge and experience which FAO has built up places it in a position to propose both an approach and a methodology for implementing a well-conceived decentralization process which can by-pass the risks just identified.

## FAO'S KEY ADVANTAGES: KNOWLEDGE AND EXPERIENCE

FAO's knowledge and experience relate to a number of **actions concerning the overall support policies for processes of decentralization as well as to the restructuring of institutions themselves**. Projects and programs developed by FAO represent particular responses to one of the following four situations, or a combination thereof:

- A structural or temporary **weakness in state institutions**;
- A decentralization process which has led to the emergence of **institutional vacuums** with regard to the supply of a certain number of support services;
- Decentralization processes which have put forward the need for a certain number of **support policies**;
- **The restructuring of expensive, inefficient agricultural support services** due to their excessive degree of centralization or the lack of ability to reach small farmers.

In the first two cases, FAO has sought to perform action to permit populations to play an important role in the new policy situation (state withdrawal, deregulation, privatization) or in a situation in which policy is lacking (state weakness, institutional vacuums). In the latter two cases, action by FAO is geared towards improving the effectiveness of government agricultural support bodies by promoting a greater involvement by rural populations. From another standpoint, FAO's projects and programs make it possible to provide an overview of decentralization processes, based on three complementary focuses:

1. **Focus on public institutions:** production of information to improve the effectiveness of State action, institutional restructuring, decentralized planning and training.
2. **Focus on civil society:** strengthening management capacity through a contractual approach, participatory extension work, popular participation programs and peasant structuring.
3. **Focus on local government levels:** the role of municipalities and geographical communities, intermediate towns and development poles, building of interfaces and regionalization.

A certain number of experiences has been gained from each focus, which should be born in mind during the formulation of a decentralization process.

## **1. Focus on public institutions**

These are actions which make it possible to enhance the effectiveness of government agricultural support bodies through the promotion of a new relationship between these institutions and rural populations, with particular emphasis on participation by small-holders. These actions give rise to three complementary lines of action:

- based on a production systems approach, surveys are carried out and typologies established to improve the State's knowledge of the real situation of the rural populations, which makes it possible to enhance dialogue between the latter and the State;
- training action to enable local partners (populations, producers, officials and elected representatives) to play a better part in decentralized planning activities;
- a key plank, namely providing consultancy on the restructuring of government agricultural support and rural development institutions.



---

A) The agricultural production systems approach: the role of surveys and typologies in dialogue between the State and rural populations

---

One of FAO's first lines of action concerns the **production of basic information on changes in agricultural production systems**, which provides development policy decision-makers with a better knowledge of the development constraints which arise from these production systems.<sup>(1)</sup> The idea is to integrate into the policy formulation process the needs of producers and rural communities, which are identified by means of surveys and typologies. The underlying theory is that, in order to formulate effective policies, not only is improved knowledge required, and hence more information, but that this should be obtained from grassroots level. The experience which FAO has built up regarding the production of this type of information is an asset which makes it possible to deal with the risk linked to an imbalance in access to information and, therefore, with the obstacles to co-ordination of activities.

This approach, which has been largely directed towards researching technical realities and, therefore, towards zoning based on local agro-environmental similarities, is today seeking to **evolve to take into account the heterogeneity within regions themselves**. As it proceeds along this path, it will be possible to use this approach as a means of formulating differentiated policies. The production systems approach provides an interesting means of revealing specific constraints on agricultural producers and, in more general terms, on rural populations, to public institutions. From this point of view, the approach permits public institutions to greatly enhance the effectiveness of policy formulation by providing them with basic information on the **characteristics, constraints and potential of the production and reproduction systems**. The approach's value also lies in the fact that it was one of the first attempts to build popular participation into the identification of constraints and their solution. Four main stages make it possible to link constraints with foreseeable solutions: i) **identification of constraints** with the involvement of partners; ii) **analysis of constraints** to determine the exact causes of each one, iii) **building of participatory solutions and decision-making**, by involving the three levels of intervention (local, regional and national), iv) implementation of solutions at local, regional and national levels.

Dialogue and building partnerships between the different partners involved in the constraints and solutions are decisive to this approach. FAO has gained valuable experience regarding how to build such partnerships and to develop frameworks for dialogue.<sup>(2)</sup> It calls for a strong determination to record peasants' opinions and to create structures for dialogue at regional level. In sum, training is as important as access to information when it comes to the social partners' decision-making and action capacity.

A second important characteristic of this process concerns the movement which has occurred from the State towards the private sector, the civil society associations and the NGO sectors concerning the **type of partners to be involved as a priority in the contractual relationship established by rural communities with other partners**. This trend has evidently been accompanied by the new configuration in project financing resources, which consists of a reduced utilization of central State resources, and a greater one of decentralized development funds that communities should be able to manage themselves. Finally, the third characteristic of this approach, seen in nearly all FAO's areas of action, is an emphasis on **partnership at every level**. A **network of partners** should be created for each level of intervention: public sector representatives, elected representatives, individual economic partners or groups of the latter, and representatives of other social groups and institutions. **This partnership focus is, perhaps, one of the most interesting experiences which FAO has gained in terms of building new relationships between the State, rural populations and other rural development partners.**

## B) The role of training for decentralized development planning and management

FAO recognises that decentralization is a complex process whose viability depends on fulfilment of a certain number of preconditions. One area where FAO has been active since the late 1970's is capacity building at the sub-national level, capacity-building being understood as encompassing not only development of human resources to enable them to perform new tasks, but also improved organizational performance and procedures. It is in fact considered that such capacity is a necessary prerequisite to decentralization and that in some cases it should be a determining factor for the scope of decentralization and the allocation of functions from central to sub-national levels of government. Initially, capacity building programmes involved primarily in-service training of officers staffing government units at the district and sub-district level. Gradually, the training has been extended also to agents from the non-governmental sector. From the initial focus on public investment planning in a deconcentrated context, the training has been broadened to encompass understanding of the economic reform policies that have a bearing on local economic development<sup>(3)</sup>.

Decentralized planning is defined as "the result of an overall institutional effort undertaken by a given country to decentralize decision-making according to a process defined throughout the country. Accordingly, the concept differs from **local level planning** which appears more as a result of local, often isolated, initiatives, without special institutional set-up or links with the national level" (IV1, p. 1).

Part of this effort concerns the creation of skills required by the decentralization process. In-service training is recognized, therefore, as an important element of decentralization programs. A constant feature of the FAO training programme has been its formulation to meet the specific training requirements of individual countries.

To this end, FAO has developed an analytical tool to allow trainers and policy-makers involved with capacity-building to analyse the decentralization process in order to assess the training requirements. The second valuable experience relates to efforts oriented towards involving rural populations in policy formulation.

### i) A framework for the analysis of decentralization

In most types of decentralization, there is scope for decision-making for economic and social development by the public sector at the sub-national level. Hence, the need to strengthen or, in some cases, create a capacity for planning and management at the local level. In order to assess the training needs required for decentralization, it is first necessary to evaluate the **type of decentralization** which is taking place, to identify the relevant organizations and the responsibilities and tasks which must be carried out by those involved in development planning and management.

The second stage of the training needs assessment concerns an evaluation of the degree of **financial devolution**: the resources allocated to the sub-national levels and the rules governing their use as well as the rules for mobilizing financial resources locally. Once the training needs arising from the scope of the decentralization and the financial instruments adopted have been assessed, it is necessary to turn to the **planning process itself**.

The issues which should be clarified concern the extent and scope of decision-making which the sub-national levels have in relation to public investment planning, i.e. the existence of global or sectoral data bases, the possibility to identify development opportunities for the area and prepare projects. All of these questions will also shape the content of the training programmes.

The fourth aspect to take into account when assessing training needs, which constitutes an important dimension of any decentralization policy, is the **degree of popular participation in decision-making** and, hence, the extent to which planning is implemented as a negotiation and management exercise. This determines how the training will tackle participatory methods in planning and management as well as methods for informing and consulting the population on policies being implemented that affect them.

This capacity-building experience of FAO is an important area of work, since it allows FAO to support governments in targeting training activities at the key players in the decentralization process, by selecting and giving priority to those playing a central role, and finally in determining the knowledge, skills and behaviours which are needed for the type of decentralization being implemented.<sup>(4)</sup>

## **ii) Involving rural populations in policy formulation**

---

One of the key problems with decentralization policies concerns the extent to which **populations support the aims of decentralization** and, therefore, their degree of motivation in participating in the planning process. Moreover, one of the training functions carried out by FAO consists in **forging a real culture of decentralization within popular organisations and among government officials**. The experience of FAO demonstrates that it is not always easy to involve the poorest groups in society in development activities.

The first problem with achieving participation by rural populations derives from the fact that instead of involving them from the project planning and formulation stage, **projects tend to come sealed and delivered by experts**, in response to a demand by the State.

A second constraint which arises in relation to the participatory approach is the **time** required to encourage and organise it when projects must often be formulated in short time periods.

A third constraint is the **multiplicity of methods** utilised for project formulation, which leads to **a multiplicity of modes of intervention** in the field in terms of setting quantitative objectives, restricting spheres of intervention, designating target villages, the more or less strict earmarking of budget lines and the setting of time frames for execution of activities.

However, one may ask oneself whether the main stumbling block which exists in relation to experiences of involving populations in policy formulation, is not **the lack of organisation or immaturity of the intermediate associations**. Under a decentralized, participatory approach, "projects trigger the creation of peasant organisations with a view to allowing the populations to take charge of their development activities. (However) the organizations in question here are modern associations created by the projects, and not at all spontaneous groups set up at the initiative of the villagers. The majority of these peasant institutions disappear when the projects which have created them have ended" (I1, pp. 51-53). Hence a certain number of conflicts arise, for example, between the village management committees set up by the projects and traditional chiefs who are trusted by the populations.

FAO has obtained three main conclusions and insights from these experiences, namely:

1. In order for training to form the main plank of a participatory approach, it must certainly be geared towards the officials in the support institutions, but also, and sometimes especially, towards the populations.
2. Training efforts cannot be truly useful unless the teaching topics and procedures focus on the creation or reinforcement of the knowledge and organizational capacity of grassroots partners, and take into account, equally, local know-how and skills.

3. Decentralization increases training needs in the same way that training increases the chances of success of decentralization. Lack of training and organization seem to be a strong reason which explains the shortcomings observed in relation to popular participation in policy formulation.

It is important to note that, starting out from an analysis of FAO's experience in the field of training, we have progressively moved to two complementary topics: the lack of **organization** of populations and adequate **information** flows to ensure co-ordination. These three types of problems are highly inter-linked, and one of FAO's valuable experiences is to have understood this and sought to integrate them in a single proposal for the creation of well-conceived decentralization policies.<sup>(5)</sup>

### C) Restructuring of agricultural support services

The third line of action implemented by FAO directly concerns supporting **the overall decentralization process through projects for the restructuring of rural development institutions.**<sup>(6)</sup> Here, restructuring is not viewed simply as action to organize services and improve their management, but rather as one of the key elements in structural adjustment, which accompanies and determines the implementation of the new political and economic approaches, based on the generally accepted principles of democratization, empowerment of and participation by populations, transparency, consultation and dialogue among the development partners. The experience acquired has made it possible to:

1. Define the new role of the State and transfer to the partners in civil society, in a decentralized manner, important activities and responsibilities which, until then, had been a matter for the central administration;
2. Revise relations between the different decision-making levels, giving the power which pertains to them to local levels in order to give meaning to the principles of decentralization and popular participation;
3. Redefine relations between the State and the private sector - in particular with agricultural trade organizations and associations of rural producers - on the basis of dialogue and consultation and, therefore, of participation in decision-making choices and formulation of development policy;
4. Propose and put in place a model for representing local agricultural diversity, informing and regularly consulting farmers on issues of interest to them, defending their points of view at decision-making bodies from local level to central level and, finally, supporting a structuring at grassroots level of rural communities.

The two planks of this line of action have to do, on the one hand, with the functions of the ministries of agriculture and, on the other, with agricultural support services

#### i) The new functions of flexible, decentralized agriculture ministries and the need for intermediate associations

---

Two principles inform FAO's approach to restructuring rural development institutions. On the one hand, institutions must be first and foremost instruments for formulating and implementing development policies. On the other, these policies will be more effective if supported by rural populations and if the latter participate in their formulation. In other words, in order to be effective, development policies should be an expression of the desires of populations "responding to their needs and taking account of their real problems and constraints while situating them in their environment with all its physical and human diversity" (IV5, p. 1). FAO believes that "rural development institutions should possess significant power and sufficient intervention capacity, but the former should be used in the framework of, and with respect for functions which are clearly redefined for each type of rural development operator, in a spirit and relations which encourage co-operation and consultation among them" (IV5 p.1).

The basic principles for identifying the functions which should fall to agriculture and rural development ministries during a process of decentralization are as follows:

1. Public services should not carry out commercial or productive activities, and these should be gradually transferred to the private sector, producer organizations or local government levels. The spheres in which public intervention specifically would occur are: the promotion of private enterprise; strengthening of peasant and

local execution and management capacity; regulation and control and the protection of natural resources.

2. "Involvement by populations in selecting and executing development action and, in general terms, managing matters which concern them, particularly at local level. This participation **involves reinforcing agricultural trade organizations at every level (and) calls for the setting up of consultation bodies at every level**" (IV5, p. 2).
3. Decentralization of powers, responsibilities and action-financing methods in order to give greater freedom and scope for action to levels closest to local realities.
4. A **global development approach** in which sectoral actions are integrated into overall development action, and one which seeks to ensure local, regional and national **co-ordination**.
5. **Regular follow-up and assessment** of results and, hence, of the adaptation capacity of programs and projects. In this context, training is essential to motivate partners, encourage initiatives and promote team work.
6. Finally, institutions can only be gradually restructured to move from an interventionist approach to a **support approach** whose intensity diminishes as training efforts grow.

The **restructuring methodology** which has developed comprises three stages, which are essential if the public institutions are to adapt to the processes of decentralization while avoiding the risks posed by the latter.

1. **Stage of analysis/assessment** of existing institutions and proposal of the restructuring blue print. Here it is a matter of distinguishing between what corresponds to the new modes of State intervention and what the latter should release. This analysis also makes it possible to propose a new sharing of powers and responsibilities among the different levels and services, as well as a concerted decision-making process. A third diagnostic element concerns relations between ministries, other institutions concerned with rural development and farmers and their trade organizations. Finally, another important strand, introduced above, is the identification of training needs.
2. **Stage of formulation of the restructuring plan.** This is an operational plan which takes account of the views and suggestions of the partners involved in the restructuring, including those concerning organizational and legal aspects and sources, types and methods of funding. In order to create it, one must ensure that lines of information, decision-making, management and action follow-up, and working methods are clearly laid down.
3. **Implementation support stage.** The restructuring plan should be formulated in the shortest possible period of time to avoid possible demobilization and avert the emergence of institutional vacuums, while providing farmers with the services which the restructured institution will not be able to furnish during the restructuring stage. The plan should include a number of support measures.
4. One of these **support measures** concerns organizational problems : the reform of legislation on trade organizations and associations to allow them greater diversity and freedom of action and initiative, and to provide them with the possibility of uniting and organizing regionally and nationally. A second support measure

concerns "reforming regulations governing the civil service and the formulation and implementation of budgets in order to ensure that the principles of decentralization and participation can be implemented and partners empowered and motivated, in particular, at field level" (IV5, p. 18).

This restructuring methodology, which has already been implemented in many countries,<sup>(7)</sup> has made it possible to acquire valuable experience regarding what the exclusive functions of agricultural ministries in the decentralized context should be. FAO teams involved in the restructuring of institutions seem to have reached a consensus regarding the four main functions which fall to the public sector:

1. **Guidance.** This function consists in "defining rural development policies and determining measures and conditions to promote their successful implementation, bearing in mind local characteristics and the need to bring about a dove-tailing of the micro-economic interests of farms and business, and regional and national macro-economic objectives. To achieve this it is necessary to utilize dialogue, promote initiatives and stimulate efforts. (It is also necessary to ensure that there is) reliable information and solid analytical and macro-economic forecasting skills in order to track changes in the agricultural sector and the influence of factors determining its future" (IV6, p. 14).
2. **Technical support.** Technical assistance is provided to producers to boost their production, productivity and income. Technical support as a function is concerned with the training of peasants and officials in conjunction with peasant organizations, extension and management consultancy, research, and support and advice for professional agricultural organizations.
3. **Follow-up and co-ordination.** "The Ministry should follow the implementation (of policies and projects) and assist in bringing about their effective implementation, while ensuring co-ordination among operators and effecting the necessary readjustments during implementation" (IV6, p. 16). This presupposes the organization of a flexible, reliable information system.
4. **Regulation and control.** "To establish the rules and procedures to be respected and the bounds which operators should not exceed in their activities, in order to conserve the national heritage and the general interest" (IV6, p. 17). This concerns most particularly the land ownership, water and forestry codes, and human, plant and animal health protection.

The above presupposes a **decentralization** of services to units in the community and departments to reinforce their presence on the ground and bring them closer to local realities. Department services and community offices "are the geographical level at which the ministry's national policy is implemented. In their respective departments, therefore, they have the task of tracking the implementation of agricultural policies, informing the ministry of changes taking place in the agricultural sector, and proposing measures to encourage development and operational intervention in the field: they must have expert ability, powers of synthesis and intervention capacity to allow them to implement a global, coherent policy on the ground which matches the local agricultural characteristics" (VIII7, p. 14).

A further valuable area of experience gained by FAO with regard to the restructuring of public institutions was to deal with the issue of the new functions of ministries underlining the fact that these new functions cannot be carried out if **professional organizations** are not created or strengthened as a **means of dialog with the State**.

FAO's own approach to institutional restructuring, in fact, underscores the need to create and/or reinforce grassroots peasant organizations to enable them to provide the services which farmers expect, while utilizing partnerships with the private sector or NGO's.

By putting forward the idea that decentralization cannot work if the decentralized State does not engage in a dialog with a partner which represents the different categories of farmers, who can play a consultative role, provide information and explain the decisions which are taken in order to facilitate their support for the new policies, has taken a decisive step towards understanding the most fundamental conditions which must be met in order for decentralization to proceed correctly. The intermediate associations would play a fundamental role as representatives and would be "the favored partner at national agriculture-ministry level and at that of all operators who can contribute to agricultural development" (VIII7, p. iii).

The mission of the representative farming organizations, therefore, would be to: i) provide **expert advice** on the situation of farmers and policy measures to be taken; ii) provide **information** to farmers on measures which affect them and facilitate a **sharing of experience** among farmers and between the latter and other actors, and iii) act as facilitators and promoters in order to **strengthen** grassroots peasant organizations.

## **ii) Options for enhanced services and the development of small-scale farming**

---

FAO's conceptual and field work to enhance agricultural support services is grounded in its recognition that the majority of public institutions responsible for providing technical support to farmers, have proved inappropriate and inefficient. The problem is that the transfer of these legal powers and responsibilities to producer organizations or to local government levels is occurring in a context in which neither the former nor the latter are capable of furnishing the technical support which farmers require. Therefore, FAO has had to devise forms of technical support incorporating close co-operation between the State, farmers and private operators, which makes it possible for State operating costs to be cut and access by small farmers to these services to be improved.<sup>(8)</sup>

In general terms, FAO came to the conclusion that institutions responsible for providing support services for small-scale agriculture had to boost their degree of co-ordination and operate in a more decentralized manner: "co-ordination at the top, decentralization within each institution, co-ordination at the grass-roots level where the institutions operate" (IV8, p. 20). Nevertheless, FAO recognises that if it is difficult to attain participation by local agents, achieving that of small farmers is a real challenge, owing to their inadequate levels of organization and training. In this respect, one of FAO's achievements consists in having dared to adopt a truly innovative approach, characterized by the following five aspects:

1. "**Responsibility** for the development of small-scale agriculture should be assumed mainly **by the farmers themselves** and less by the state and its services, thereby creating the conditions for farmers to gradually assume direct responsibility for their work and development.
2. "The state should **transfer to the private sector** services and activities on which the State has performed poorly and which can be supplied efficiently by the private sector. The **small farmers' organizations should also be included as part of the private sector**.
3. "**Extension** and other services should focus less on encouraging the small farmer

to adopt technologies based on the use of expensive and scarce inputs, which are often beyond their means, and **should concentrate more on increasing the farmers' capacity to exploit existing farm resources in an integrated and ongoing manner without incurring new costs and risks.**

4. "The **experiences of numerous ONGs** should be put to good use.
5. "Measures should be introduced to **improve the efficiency and effectiveness of those public services which must necessarily remain under Government control**: staff training and the effective participation of farmers in the programming of the services established for their benefit" (IV8, pp. 24-25).

When these guidelines are followed, agricultural support services in the decentralization context will be essentially a network of services supplied by government, semi-public agencies, NGOs, co-operatives and other rural organizations, private enterprise and market forces. This network would be better placed than the centralized institutions alone to meet the needs of farming communities and, in particular, of small farmers and most disadvantaged groups. Here again, small producers' organizations are decisive in ensuring the proper functioning of the network. Recognition of the need to support the organization of rural populations by every means possible is an important achievement and characteristic of the experience and knowledge-base which FAO has built up. This explains why actions specific to the public institutions focus are accompanied by a simultaneous, very intensive development of a focus on civil society, which is complementary to it and vital for its success.



## **2. Focus on civil society**

This consists of a number of actions which allow populations to play a decisive role in rural development and the management of their reproduction strategies. This focus comprises a great wealth and variety of approaches, programs and projects, three of which seem particularly important and assist in structuring analysis of decentralization processes. Firstly, the experience which has been built up with regard to village land management, designed to develop the contractual approach which characterizes 's different lines of work. Secondly, in the particular field of extension, a very effective organization of this activity based on a participatory approach which pay special attention to regional co-ordination of local actions. Finally, Popular Participation Programs and experiences connected with the structuring of peasant organizations.



---

A) Promotion of land management projects and links between local communities and the State

---

One of FAO's main lines of action consists of the **promotion of Village Land Management projects (VLM)**.<sup>(9)</sup> It is aimed at creating conditions which enable local communities to become involved in managing social investments and natural resources. It has an impact on all analysis of decentralization since it puts forward the need to **forge contractual links between villages and the State**. Further development of this experience of FAO would make it possible to deal with risk 3 of decentralization, namely the problem of managing funds in the absence of technical skills. In addition, the insistence in this type of projects on including **regional co-ordination mechanisms as well as different types of dialog with national public bodies**, would also make it possible to avoid risk 1, namely of substituting a pure supply philosophy for a demand philosophy. In any case, the essence and importance of experience regarding this line of action lie in **empowering peasant organisations and rural communities to directly assume agricultural and rural support services**.

The knowledge accumulated by FAO in this area has to do with regional co-ordination mechanisms and forms of participation on the one hand, and, on the other, with the empowerment of peasant organizations and rural communities. Before introducing these two points, it is important to describe the background to this approach, the experience which has been gained and its limitations.

**i) The land management approach - a means of ensuring community participation**

---

The village land management (VLM) methodology forms part of FAO's work to assist public institutions to better understand the true nature of the constraints specific to the agricultural systems and agrarian structures in which they seek to intervene. This methodology is grounded in the finding that projects carried out without empowering populations have not led either to sustainable development or conservation of the productive capital of natural resources.<sup>(10)</sup> This is why FAO's Investment Center has tested a new project implementation approach, VLM, aimed principally at ensuring sustainable production based on the protection of productive resource capital, participation by rural communities in designing policies to enhance their living conditions, technology based on rural populations' expectations, decentralization of decision-making power and finance mechanisms, and management geared specifically to preventing land ownership conflicts and protecting bio-diversity. Hence, the VLM approach placed emphasis on a considerable empowerment of rural communities, which not only implies real decentralization but also an enhanced appreciation of the knowledge which the latter have about problems and possible solutions. Nevertheless, it has had to be recognized that in order for such empowerment to take place, organized village structures and strong social cohesion needed to exist.

**Training** has been recognized as a central requirement for VLM projects. However, in this approach it is recognized that training commences with **information**, which should form an integral part of the process. **Political commitment** must also be built around a VLM project. Such a commitment takes different forms: i) decentralization and delegation of power and decisions both at regional and village levels, ii) concerted, co-ordinated support by specialist ministries and sponsors, iii) a real willingness on the part of the administration to move from a policy of simply conserving the potential of natural resources, based on regulations and bans, to a rational, participatory style of production management.

Current experiences in Burkina Faso have made it possible to clarify some **basic principles** of the VLM approach: i) **participation** in and **the transfer of responsibility** for identifying constraints, selecting, performing and evaluating actions, sharing profits or losses; ii) the approach is **global and multi-sectoral** to permit balanced land development iii) there is a

**multidisciplinary** analysis and design capacity; iv) it is also **upward and decentralized** and gives local communities the capacity to take charge of their own development; v) it includes **dialog** between the different partners; vi) it must be **flexible**, with open, multi-staged projects in which everything is not specified in detail.

The characteristics of the VLM approach assist in creating conditions which allow **decentralization** to operate successfully, since they prepare local communities for the transfer of state activities, while furnishing them with the chance to manage their own affairs. At the same time, however, **land management can only function in a context in which formulation, management and assessment powers have been decentralized**. For this purpose, FAO's experience has repeatedly shown that decentralization must be accompanied by information and training activities, and the creation of a legal, institutional and legislative framework appropriate to such a transfer of powers. Even more importantly, the approach calls for a **strong capacity to structure peasant communities** as well as an **ability on the part of officials to participate in such a process**, and to provide technical support for and co-ordinate interventions.

If the success of projects hinges on the **uncertain matter of transferring know-how and responsibility to the communities in question**, " the principal risk probably concerns the difficulties posed by such a transfer. In fact, for the process to succeed it is necessary for: i) those concerned to accept their new responsibilities and corresponding commitments; ii) the supervisory authorities to agree to relinquish age-old prerogatives and officially recognize the transfer and the new village leaders, iii) the process to be unhindered by the weakness of partners. **In the first case, risks relate to the possibility of inadequate social organization, land conflict or disinterest in commitments to restore the natural environment when land pressure remains low**. In the second case, the legal vacuum concerning recognition of villages' powers and uncertainty regarding the content of agricultural and land reform and of decentralization and the establishment of elected authorities remain worrying. In the third case, the institutional evolution of the local project implementing agency, as well as knowledge of its intervention capacity, bearing in mind other commitments, pose another serious risk" (II6, p. 83).

On the other hand, the approach has also revealed **limitations in certain areas**. " The conditions do not yet exist to permit the emergence of true community representativeness, without the exclusion of marginalised groups" (II6, p. 31). "In terms of land ownership, assessments generally fail to take account of problems within social groups or families, when there is a need to predict the land-ownership implications of innovations undertaken. (A further problem concerns) knowing how to reconcile short-term programming based on needs expressed by populations and long-term planning of actions to restore and develop renewable natural resources. (Finally) consultation frameworks have only functioned when created and supported materially by projects which involve themselves at every level. Not all the advantages which are expected of such consultation frameworks are achieved (because of): i) the presence of external partners with other priorities, ii) fear of technical services of losing certain sectoral prerogatives, iii) lack of effective decentralization, which precludes field experts from making decisions without referring to the parent structure, which does not always perceive the urgent nature of the consultations" (II6, p. 32).

This qualified appraisal of FAO's experience is useful in pointing up the existence of two main stumbling blocks which have to be resolved for this type of project to succeed: on the one hand, achievement of forms of co-ordination and dialog, and, on the other, the transfer of responsibility to, and empowerment and structuring of peasant organisations and rural communities.

## ii) **Regional co-ordination mechanisms and types of consultation**

---

An important requirement of the VLM approach is to achieve an articulation between land management and national development policies when formulating and executing LM plans. **Regional co-ordination** ensures a consistent, effective implementation of the approach and also the success of national policies on the ground.<sup>(11)</sup> Villagers are not cut off from the rest of the country, and nor can their strategies be. This is why **one of the advantages of this approach, compared to traditional rural development approaches, lies in developing a new type of relationship in rural populations, based on dialog at local level, and subsequently, at regional and national levels.** A requirement for the establishment of well-conceived decentralization policies is the creation of conditions for participation and upward planning. Yet these conditions also call, in turn, for an ability to organise **concerted, co-ordinated strategies and partnerships.** One advantage of FAO's land management experience is precisely that it has been able to build this type of strategies and relationships.

In fact, in VLM, "participation is a dynamic which is constantly reactivated, functional and pragmatic, in which development agents and the population unite their knowledge, know-how and wishes in concerted actions, taken in partnership, to bring about a sustainable enhancement of the approach to and management of actions undertaken" (II3, p. 10). Fundamentally, therefore, this is a partnership approach favouring: complete involvement by partners in the environment, consultations with populations and all those intervening, a sharing of responsibilities and mutual commitment, as well as a pooling of knowledge and know-how.

## iii) **Transfer of responsibilities to peasant organizations and rural communities**

---

It is impossible to conceive of LM without the existence of a certain degree of organization of grassroots communities. Village land management (VLM) presupposes the existence of a quite considerable level of organization of populations, for decision-making and action purposes. FAO teams involved in this area believe that organization around VLM should result from action and a real need felt by populations; it should be supported by existing local dynamics to make these evolve towards a representative, competent form of organization which, in the land management approach, is known as the **Village Land Management Committee (LMVC).** These CVGT face a certain number of problems, which are related in some cases with a lack of skills, but, more generally, with their legitimacy and representativeness, and therefore with possibilities of conflict with traditional authorities and the lack of government recognition.

What is seen, however, despite such obstacles, is that VLM projects have managed to gradually strengthen social cohesion within villages. Assessments performed as part of FAO projects in Burkina Faso seem to show that VLM projects bring villagers together; consultations and dialog between farmers and cattle breeders were attempted; technology skills are upgraded and awareness and understanding of the phenomenon of degradation of natural resources increase: " the operational capacity of peasant organisations grew considerably and there is an increasing sense of empowerment on the part of peasants in terms of managing development. The populations felt that the status of the administration had changed, since it is no longer a coercive structure but rather a service providing support for peasant initiatives and village development. The process of learning to seek out development support partners triggers a growth in peasant initiatives, offering villagers major development possibilities.

**Empowerment and rural structuring** are also two main thrusts of co-operation between the World Bank and FAO in north-east Brazil and of the joint project which both institutions have proposed for the development of deprived areas of Mexico.<sup>(12)</sup> In both types of intervention there is a recognition that "rapid progress can be made if community participation is enhanced and decision-making authority is decentralized to lower levels of government and other community-based institutions" (V6, p. 1). These two conditions ensure that investments carried out will match the populations' priorities and that the latter feel accountable for the management of such investment.

There is another side to community empowerment which has to do with project financing mechanisms. There is a gradual move away from essentially public and/or international financing to finance schemes in which participation by municipalities and local populations starts to be incorporated into overall project budgets. This is the counterpart of the move from supply-driven projects to a new demand-led approach, as well as an expression of the fact that decision-making and resource allocation procedures are being transferred from national to regional level and to the level of regional-local co-operation.

One of the land management approach's recognized advantages is that " by making a pre-requisite for any intervention acquisition of an in-depth knowledge of the environment, it has permitted an enhanced identification, with the rural populations, of the real constraints on the sustainable development of rural areas. It has emphasized the predominance of social, legislative and financial factors over technical constraints alone. It has also revealed that it was less a matter of awareness-building among populations and more one of furnishing them with the means to organize" (VIII6, p. 19) of encouraging the structuring of communities, branches of production and farmers' organizations at local and regional level and creating dialog frameworks in order to build partnerships. Organization, structuring, consultations and partnership are essential conditions required to avert the decentralization risks which FAO has identified. In this respect, the experience accumulated by FAO on these topics represents a valuable asset to be taken into account in the formulation of well-conceived decentralization policies.

However, we should not forget that VLM is just one component of rural development; it alone cannot ensure the development of different village areas or co-ordination and consistency among them. Further components concern up-stream and down-stream production activities and support services, such as training, extension, research and development and technical assistance. We have already shown that FAO possesses a wealth of experience in the field of training and restructuring support services. In addition, it has also accumulated experience and knowledge in the field of extension.

## B) Extension policy within the participatory approach

One line of FAO's work, support for participatory extension, is directly related to an aspect that we have often seen in previous sections, namely, the organization of rural populations to enable them to assume the management of services transferred by the State or which the State is unable to assume owing to temporary or structural weaknesses.<sup>(13)</sup> Here FAO's work consists in proposing an approach based on participatory extension and a search for proximity with government partners, which permits both an enhanced integration of the needs of small agricultural producers in the formulation of extension/research policy and the incorporation of these policies into a wider set of development actions. The approach leads both to particular support for peasant organizations, to enable them to participate in extension work and training as well as work to restructure national agricultural research systems.

FAO projects which have followed this approach, like those in the land management approach, have aimed at ensuring some degree of co-ordination of local actions, achieved thanks to the presence of regional extension co-ordinators or research planning committees responsible for ensuring consistency among local actions and presenting the regional program to central government. The participatory approach forms the central plank of extension projects. It has enabled FAO to strengthen its experience with regard to supporting peasant organizations and co-ordinating local action to ensure regional programming.<sup>(14)</sup>

### i) **Support for peasant organisation**

The agricultural extension scheme proposed by FAO is based on the principle of peasant participation and based to a greater extent on a group approach than on the training of individuals. FAO has been keen to ensure that the scheme takes account of the diversity of production methods and, therefore, leads to the organization of a system of differentiated messages formulated on the basis of a sophisticated knowledge of local know-how and resources. Finally, the aim is for both government and populations to view extension not as an external service, but rather as a tool which strengthens the associative capacity of communities and their sense of responsibility, with the additional aim of solving up-stream and down-stream production problems.

#### *1) The foundation of the extension scheme: the participatory approach*

The participatory approach of the extension scheme ensures "peasants are involved in analysis of the environment and of agricultural problems, selection of extension subjects and programming, the follow-up and evaluation of the annual harvest, with a view to gradually empowering peasant groups" (I3, p. 2). Here, participation is viewed as "a joint undertaking of actions which are jointly decided" (I2, p. 5). Participation consists of three main forms of progressive commitment: during consultations, peasants give their views to the development agents or structures; in co-management, peasants make decisions at the same time as the agents; with empowerment, peasants make the final decision. The three formulae are utilised as much for analysis of situations and consideration of problems as for the selection of extension topics, management of actions and performance of follow up and assessment. Naturally the aim is to gradually move towards empowerment, although, owing to risks relating to the paternalist tradition, it would be a mistake to begin with this form of participation.

FAO believes that the extension scheme should have a certain number of well- identified characteristics: it should be "a co-ordinated overall development aiming to introduce improvements to farms, while carrying out a series of awareness-raising, promotional, training and support actions with peasants - whose selection and programming are the result

of **consultations** with them and an analysis of the situation regarding their farming methods - and at the same time seeking to ensure that villagers take responsibility for their own development" (I3, p. 7). In the long run, as with the land management approach, it is necessary for organization and consultations to be the forms which the empowerment of and programming by the peasants themselves take.

The extension scheme ceases to be an external support service for peasants and becomes an instrument to support the creation of a participatory dynamic, which also ensures "the desired innovation-transfer inputs in the form of information, training and peasant organization" (I3, p. 7). The approach is global from two points of view: it deals with the entire set of problems experienced, as much from the technical and socio-economic as from the cultural and institutional points of view. The approach is also decentralized since it is carried out, firstly, at the place where the beneficiaries of extension are located (the village community) and is co-ordinated, subsequently, at regional level. Finally, the approach is supported by the **national level**.<sup>(15)</sup>

## *2) Partners and relations*

The importance of experience as regards analysis of decentralization will already be apparent. This kind of project has succeeded in making peasants, particularly in the immediate intervention zone, the main protagonists of the approach rather than the targets of extension. It is with groups of peasants that the extension agents build information-exchange relationships. Decision-making is carried out on a contractual basis, creating commitment on the part of peasants and the extension worker. Under this approach, the rural population works in **partnership with the extension agents**.

"Particular emphasis is placed on feed-back of results of observations and surveys to villagers: such a feed-back makes it possible not only to validate the findings, but also to raise awareness among and mobilise the peasants" (I3, p. 27). In this sense, the feed-back provides an opportunity to incorporate peasants' own behaviours, know-how and technical skills into the extension programs.

One tool on which assessments for the creation of extension programs are based, and which is very useful for differentiating policies and interventions, is the identification of standard peasant groups, which are characterised by combinations of field and size types. Representative samples are obtained for each group, which are then used to conduct in-depth surveys of each group household.: family composition, fields and production, labour and availability of same, capital, marketing, household spending, and output. This makes it possible to conduct an assessment highlighting the main features of the operation of the household and the constraints it faces, which is carried out for each peasant group. "This set of points strengthens the organizational potential of the peasants, because they are furnished with a structured image of their community" (I3, p. 28-29). However, the importance of such a typology of farmers also lies in the fact that extension topics can be differentiated, while enhancing chances of appropriation, and focusing action on those identified as the most important and/or weakest groups.

## **ii) From co-ordination of local actions to regional programming**

---

A salient feature of FAO's proposals regarding participatory extension schemes, is the presence of a co-ordinator responsible for all extension action in the region for which he or she is responsible.<sup>(16)</sup> He or she is assigned the task of harmonising actions regionally and, to do so, must also fulfil an information role, providing data on all aspects of the agricultural

situation and changes therein. The regional inspector, in liaison with the co-ordinator, uses this data to ensure co-ordination with the research and training operations and the rural communication systems. "Village programming will be performed following procedures which relate back and forth between needs identified by farmers in villages in the immediate intervention zone, on the one hand, and the aims and resources provided by national programming, on the other, which have an impact in each region" (I3, p. 36). This is a means not only of ensuring that there is a suitable level of consultations, joint decision-making and organization for each village, but also of ensuring consistency and co-ordination with regional extension programs. Naturally, peasant involvement is strongest at local level. In fact, at this level, the **analysis of their environment** enables them to grow in awareness. **Village programming** implies a collective commitment, **extension action** implies individual involvement, and **follow-up and assessment** offer the opportunity for self-criticism which is participatory and empowering. Regional partners (the inspector and co-ordinator) ensure consistency, summarise field data and guarantee and are responsible for the administrative and financial management of resources earmarked for extension. This methodology makes it possible to avoid the principal risk inherent in decentralization, namely the substitution of a supply philosophy for a pure demand philosophy, without any regionalization of demands or the possibility of setting up a national strategy.

The number of agents intervening may be large, but co-ordination of the system ensures that they implement a single policy in response to the **mobilization of peasant organizations**. A similar approach gives rise to a partnership with the support structures to provide producers with expertise or additional resources.

In this respect, and despite the difficult context, the Zairian National Extension Scheme seems remarkable, for it had the merit of **bringing different partners together, co-ordinating their partnerships and mobilizing all existing resources, including the private sector and NGOs. More importantly still, it has brought together and empowered peasant organizations**, while permitting extension to be reorganized, under the banner of constraint. These are all experiences which FAO has gained of creating pre-conditions for decentralization.

## C) Popular participation programs and structuring peasant organizations

The sixth line of action concerns popular participation programs and programs for supporting the establishment and/or strengthening of intermediate associations.<sup>(17)</sup> Here the starting point was recognition that **agricultural support services could be costly and ineffective, owing to their excessive centralization and inability to reach the small farming sector**. The core of experiences and knowledge which FAO has accumulated in the field of popular participation comprises three types of highly complementary actions.<sup>(18)</sup>

Firstly, the popular participation programs themselves (PPP, decentralized, participatory rural development) which focus, in particular, on **building rural organizations capable of assuming the management of support services and developing income-generating activities**. Secondly, the **establishment of partnerships with NGOs** in order to ensure production of information and a flow of the latter towards producer organizations. Finally, projects designed to encourage a **structuring of peasant organizations and, hence, the enhancement of conditions for consultations between the State and representative organizations**.<sup>(19)</sup>

### i) Building rural organizations capable of assuming management of support services: People's Participation Programs

**Popular participation** involves a process of returning to rural populations "powers of initiative and decision-making concerning the implementation of actions and programs concerning their own futures. It presupposes that external agents and states consider peasants, cattle breeders and craftspeople, etc. as development agents and full partners and not as targets for an external project or the means to implement decisions taken without them" (VI5, p. 275). Participation can only be built around a mobilizing project. Hence the birth and development of popular participation programs (PPP) geared towards identifying and bringing about a general spread in income-generating activities, based on a business philosophy.<sup>(20)</sup>

#### *1) Background to the PPPs: guiding principles and methodology*

The PPP approach was developed following the World Conference on Agrarian Reform and Rural Development held by FAO in 1979. The idea was to develop an operational means of incorporating popular participation into rural development and agricultural development programs, as well as into the formulation of government strategies and programs. " Its main emphasis is on the formation of small, self-reliant groups of the rural poor which will allow members to work together on income-generating activities, with access to credit, farm inputs and training, and which provide a collective voice for representing their interests with local government and other organizations with whom they wish to interact". (VII5, p. 1).

The closest forerunners of this approach were two FAO programs launched in the mid- 1970s: the Rural Organizations Action Program (ROAP) and the Small Farmers Development Program (SFDP), which posed questions about why the poorest did not have access to resources. **Lack of organization** appeared as a key explanatory factor and action to correct this shortcoming became a central feature of these two programs. The second idea was that the **network of public institutions was not designed to support the smallest farmers**. The development of the SFDP was aimed at combating these two trends, on the basis of several principles which subsequently came to form the core of PPPs:

- "participatory research and planning from below;

- small, socially and economically homogeneous groups with a common desire to work together;
- decision-making by consensus, group action and group responsibility;
- use of group organizers as facilitators, with small farmer groups developing their own leadership and fostering self-reliance;
- low-cost technology appropriate to farmer needs and means of sustainability;
- access to credit through mobilization of group savings, or financial institutions which accept social collateral;
- productive employment for the landless;
- group marketing and storage" (VII5, pp. 4-5).

In summary, the guiding hypothesis behind the PPP approach is that "government and non-government development services could most efficiently be channelled to the rural poor if the latter were organized into small, informal self-help groups, formed around common income-generating activities which they themselves had identified" (VII5, p. 7).

In PPPs, participation is two-dimensional: there is an **economic dimension** geared towards income generation and incorporation into the market economy, and a **political dimension**, which for the poorest, consists in acquiring "voice and recognition in the community as equals with others, including more social and political involvement. This is achieved within PPP by acquiring leadership skills following organization into groups and inter-group associations" (VII5, p. 9).

To fulfil these two dimensions, the PPP approach proposes a methodology with the following features: i) targeting interventions towards the poor in the countryside; ii) assisting them to form small groups as a means of organizing for action; iii) defining action on the basis of priorities defined by the beneficiaries; iv) training group facilitators in participatory methods and making local authorities aware of the aims of PPPs; v) structuring participation around income-generating activities; vi) introducing credit and savings schemes; vii) setting up local co-ordinating committees made up of representatives of the groups, authorities and local leaders; viii) introducing a continuous, participatory follow-up and assessment process.<sup>(21)</sup>

## *2) Subjects relating to the development of the approach: implementing agency and target population*

One change which the approach ushers in concerns the selection of the program implementing agency, which brings about the move from international co-operation to a special partnership with NGOs: " there is a general consensus amongst the international development agencies that the promotion of agricultural and rural development can often be achieved more effectively through non-government organizations than by government agencies. Government agencies have the advantage of major access to resources and of substantial authority and institutional capacity, whereas NGOs are considered to be closer to the people. Another advantage of NGOs is their flexibility. **The value of an NGO as an implementing agency might be measured against its ability to form linkages and interface effectively with government services**" (VII5, pp. 4041).

A complementary issue concerns the means of selecting the target populations for programs. A summary typology of rural populations was set up to distinguish between: "a) the rich,

those with an abundance of the means of production, b) the middle class, those with secure and sufficient access to **institutions providing agricultural** services income and assets, c) subsistence producers, with some but not very much access to productive means, d) the very poor, those with very little access to resources and e) the destitute, those who are not able to help themselves. There was consensus that the third and fourth categories were those most able to be assisted by the PPP approach (VII5, p. 42).

The PPPs are an important development by FAO to create conditions under which most deprived groups can organize to assume the management of support services, in a context of decentralization and empowerment. Out of these conditions, the approach favored the development of entrepreneurial skills as a means of ensuring self-reliance for the groups in the medium- and long-term. A particular facet of this organizational work concerns a focus on women during group training.<sup>(22)</sup> In fact, FAO underlined the need to take account of gender questions in the participatory programs, because the position of women and men in relation to social and economic forces is not necessarily the same.

The five main advantages gained from involvement in PPPs, and which all assisted to some extent in strengthening decentralization processes are:

1. Empowerment, defined as "increased confidence or ability to speak for one self; or an encouragement to become a leader in the community. Such confidence in their own leadership, organizational and decision-making capabilities gained through PPP participation represents empowerment and a stronger desire for action" (VII6, p. 11).
2. External linkages. These take different forms varying from learning through contact with people outside the group (GP, extension agents, health workers, etc.) to knowledge and recognition of them by the outside world.
3. Sharing knowledge in a large number of spheres relating to productive activities, marketing (market and price information) and input suppliers.
4. Emergency resources, which allow people to help each other in times of difficulty.
5. Joint work to assist each other in work in the field or to solve other types of problems.

One important lesson of PPPs, concerning international co-operation mechanisms, is that it is possible to augment the impact of the funds available to public development authorities by transforming them into levers to mobilise additional resources. Co-operation resources should be seen as resources for mobilizing other resources. This is a fundamental methodological step forward, which was usefully implemented to develop entrepreneurial activities.

These advances which were made possible under PPPs are important because they can play a central role in rural development by making it possible to create an information, organization and representation network, since the groups of enterprises created by the PPPs have the authority to re-group in small community enterprise associations. The existence of associations of this type can facilitate services such as: bulk purchasing of inputs; funding, either through the association's savings fund or the banks; joint marketing of produce; group representation vis-à-vis government and other organisations or service institutions; the organization of training, and, in general, an interchange of information.

## ii) A model for relations between the rural development partners: FAO - NGOs - Popular Organizations

---

The experience of co-operation between FAO, NGOs and popular organizations in Senegal is very interesting from the point of view of building innovative relations between rural development partners.<sup>(23)</sup> In the 1970s, Senegal witnessed the emergence of a new type of organization, which started to develop around food-related issues and gradually focused on up-stream and down-stream production activities. They federated at district and regional level and, in 1976, nine regional associations set up FONGS, an independent peasant movement of State co-operatives.

"From the outset, FONGS granted top priority to strengthening the nascent peasant movement, by running a substantial training program for leaders and members of rural associations and fostering solidarity and co-operation links among peasant organisations. The State's abandonment of functions and services which it had previously provided, obliged FONGS to step up mobilisation by its members" (VII8, p. 4). Thus, new activities were launched: a grain bank and a savings and credit program. What is important to note is that during the course of this process, FONGS strengthened its capacity to express and defend the interests of small rural producers; this "shed light on the need to build a basis for systematic dialog between the government and representative farming associations such as FONGS" (VII8, p. 5). In order to set this dialog in motion, FONGS decided to hold a national forum on the future of Senegalese peasants.

The Forum's aim had been recognized by FAO as an approach which could be favored to support partnership approaches in rural development: "assisting FONGS members in analysing the difficulties they face at micro-economic level, understanding the links between these difficulties and the macro-economic constraints imposed upon the Senegalese government by structural adjustment, and formulating reasonable, viable proposals for mitigating the negative impact of structural adjustment and means of helping farmers' organizations to undertake tasks previously performed by the State" (VII8, pp. 5-6).

The Forum made it possible to clarify the concept of peasant empowerment, incorporating into it the maturation process of the peasant movement itself; to commence consideration of the environment and appropriate corrective measures; to discuss the impact of new policies on peasant farming, based on an analysis of FONGS and its proposals for the future; as well as to "consider together the creation of an appropriate framework for dialog and negotiations between the Government, the peasant movement and donors" (VII8, p. 9). This experience of co-operation between FAO and NGOs represents both a model and a tool for organizing the dialog and consultations relations which the decentralization process implies.

The popular organizations considered that it was important to make the State understand that, although the peasant movement accepted the State's retrenchment as a strategic thrust, it felt that the pace of withdrawal was too swift, and was impeding it from adapting and taking advantage of the possibilities offered by it.

Clearly this approach is central to FAO's position on decentralization processes. In fact, co-operation between FAO and FONGS has allowed the peasant movement to affirm its right to **participate, as an important component of society, in decision-making on issues relating to the countryside**: namely, the use of rural development-oriented external financing; the drafting of laws affecting the rural population and, in the framework of the regionalization process, the right to participate in local government and land management through representation on local, department and regional development councils. Thus, FAO's assistance had made it possible to **lay the foundation for dialog among peasant associations, NGOs, governments and major development partners**.

It should be pointed out that FAO understood very early on the potential for mobilization inherent in co-operation with NGOs.<sup>(24)</sup> Since 1959, in the framework of the Freedom from Hunger Campaign/Action for Development (FFCH/AD), one of FAO's established aims was to launch "a campaign aiming to publicize the facts of the food situation, **to induce non-governmental organizations in industrialized countries to raise funds for grassroots projects in developing countries** and thus to link people in developing and developed countries in shared action" (VII9, p. 1). During the 1960s, this campaign made it possible to strengthen relations between NGOs and governments through symposia for joint analysis and action on hunger and malnutrition; to set up over 300 development projects and carry out information and training work.

"With the launching of the Campaign in 1959, FAO was among the first agencies in the UN system to give organized access to the non-governmental organizations. This represented a tangible evidence of the importance attached to keeping the organization's ultimate goals firmly in mind, despite the essentially technical nature of activities, and to the **belief that development cannot be an exclusive concern and responsibility of government but pertains to society as a whole**" (VII9, p. 2). Subsequently, during the 1970s, there was a growth in the profile of popular participation issues and the strategic importance afforded to NGOs as facilitators of popular participation, and they became key concepts.

On the other hand, the growth in relations with NGOs in the South, had an impact on **the project approach promoted by FAO**. These projects had been locally oriented to make specific achievements available to rural populations. Yet their impact on development had been hindered by their sectoral focus and the fact that they had been identified and formulated outside the communities which they were intending to benefit. Hence, two project-formulation innovations were introduced by FAO in the context of FFHC/AD: "First, it tried to ensure that action projects were formulated and implemented in such a way as to belong to local organizations. Secondly, FFHC/AD began to examine, with its NGO partners, the kinds of non-project support they required in order to render their activities more effective" (VII9, p. 5).

It was during the 1980s that NGOs were generally recognized as development partners, echoing recognition of their ability to reach the poorest sectors and achieve impact at local level. At the same time, there was a clearer awareness of the limitations of "projects" as a development tool and of the need to explore other forms of co-operation to complement the programs-projects approach.

The model of relations between FAO and NGOs was, therefore, gradually extended and enhanced. Today, it represents a definite advantage when it comes to setting up policies to support well-conceived decentralization policies. Indeed, one risk posed by decentralization is that appropriation by local elites may occur, owing to a **lack of or weakness in rural organization**. Work with NGOs aimed at creating or strengthening rural organization curbs the tendency on the part of local elites to present themselves as the sole interfaces between the outside world and the countryside, and to strip rural populations of their bargaining powers.

### **iii) Enhancement of conditions for dialog between the State and representative organizations by means of peasant organization**

The concept of sustainable development has reinforced the trend towards the promotion of popular participation since it holds that development action can only be reproduced if the rural populations themselves take effective charge of it. This new rural development strategy

recognizes that if the rural poor are not provided with the means to participate in actions affecting them, they will remain on the sidelines.

Fostering popular participation goes hand in hand with bolstering spontaneously formed, autonomous, democratic popular organizations, local community organizations, and self-help organizations, which also encompass traditional community councils, informal groups, co-operatives, organizations of rural workers, peasants unions, women's associations, etc. Nevertheless, "the vast majority of the rural population is not yet organized and does not benefit from the dynamics of such groups" (VII4, p. 4). This is why, in 1991, FAO launched an **Action Plan to Augment Popular Participation**, which involves peasant organization and an enhancement of conditions for dialog with the State.<sup>(25)</sup>

An important area of experience which has had considerable impact on levels of peasant organization and dialog with the State, concerns the Forestry, Trees and Populations Program (FTP), which aimed to ensure peasant participation in community forestry management.<sup>(26)</sup> This program recognises the importance to rural populations of forestry resources, as well as the need for local involvement by populations in the sustainable management of such resources. The FTP program poses some key questions: "How can dialog be promoted between interested parties based on their common interests and principles of equity? How can opportunities be enhanced for dealing with disputes arising with respect to community forestry activities through measures such as decentralization, empowerment and land privatization? How can local and traditional systems contribute to resolving such conflicts and improve institutional conflict resolution capacity?" (VII13, pp. 13-14).

The FTP is structured along three main lines: i) participatory methodologies, ii) local management of forestry resources, and iii) extension, training, and communication. Essentially, it is a **prescriptive community forestry program designed to strengthen network members' capacity to carry out the following types of action: methodologies, experimentation, and adaptation**. An essential component of the activity are the facilitators, whose role is to bring institutions connected with forestry together to assist them in **analyzing opportunities and constraints for community forestry in each country**. They strive to involve all partners in order to form institutional clusters.

In Latin America, facilitators acted quite successfully as an **interface between States and communities**. While they did not always succeed in changing policies, they managed to bring some influence to bear on policy formulation and to bring about the **inclusion in the State's agenda of a number of grassroots concerns**. One of the FTP Program's most interesting achievements was the creation, in Central America, of the Coodinacion Indigena-Campesina Agro-Forestal Comunitaria (COICAFOC), an umbrella organization representing over 50 organizations from all of Central America. FAO strongly supported the establishment and institutional consolidation of this organization. Today, COICAFOC is in a position to **negotiate with the State, express its views and present an important development platform**.

Hence, this program represents an area of experience that FAO possesses regarding rural organization and dialog with the State. Its aim is to: "reinforce national and regional institutions that in turn work to strengthen local people's ability to manage and use their natural resources. Regional facilitators and local institutions identify opportunities and constraints for community forestry development on the basis of which national and regional priorities are identified and activities planned" (VII10, p. 1).



### 3. Focus on local government levels

This third focus covers action to strengthen areas, and local and regional levels, of policy formulation. As a line of action it raises the issue of **local government levels** (municipalities) in a way which can directly aid thinking on decentralization, since the question of regionalization is introduced from the standpoint of **the capacity of local government levels to become true poles of rural development**.<sup>(27)</sup> This approach complements that which poses the question of how to build **interfaces between national and local levels of government**: regions, micro-regions, information schemes for rural communities, links between local development and strategic frameworks. The two approaches constitute a specific contribution by FAO, which can be used to enhance one strand of decentralization methodology, discussed in later sections, namely: **regionalization or, more precisely, the role of the region as interface between local development and strategic frameworks**.



---

## A) Local government levels in a decentralization process

---

**Development of the local level**, as the place not only for initiatives but also for decision-making, raises the question of the **articulation between this level and wider geographical and decision-making levels**. Under decentralization, the local level is no longer the **point of implementation** of guidelines determined by external agents, but, rather, **the place where local actors regain the initiative and define and implement guidelines to achieve development for themselves**.

What is important about the FAO approach to local levels is its recognition that at these levels there is **room for initiative** regarding organization and association, economic activity and the recognition of partners. It is then a matter of supporting local partners, so that they can set themselves **objectives which are really dynamic and shared**, as a foundation for the construction of new dynamics. Finally, this approach acknowledges that the local level is not **a homogeneous area**, and that, when evaluating mobilization at the local level, **account must be taken of the numerous partners** acting directly at local level, or making decisions which have an impact on the local situation.

Furthermore, the local level is not an area governed by separate rules, but rather **a set of areas** with corresponding, specific, decision-making units. Decisions made in each area are influenced by decisions taken in other areas, and also influence them, in turn; naturally the room to manoeuvre of each decision-making unit varies and is also complicated by the fact that there may be several decision-makers in each area. Therefore, there is a need to elucidate the areas and the decision-making units which govern them, as well as relations between these areas and the decision-making units. The rise in the importance of the local, nevertheless, calls for an **ordering by the State** of actions undertaken at this level, if the risk is to be avoided of replacing a supply-driven philosophy with one that is demand led, and lacking national co-ordination or regional consistency.

In the joint FAO-World Bank Projects in north-eastern Brazil, prioritisation of local levels under decentralization is aimed at building into development strategies not only the interests and wishes of individuals, with the productive assets at their disposal, but also, and to the same extent, those of all members of local communities, particularly the poorest, who tend to be marginalized and excluded from more global or national development approaches. An assessment of these projects throws up some interesting results regarding the importance of local government levels to development processes:

"First, the program has generated unprecedented enthusiasm among beneficiaries and favorable multiplier effects, and mobilized additional public municipal funds. Second, the reformulated NRD's participatory approach has benefited community organization, increased transparency, and demonstrated that rural communities can influence the allocation and use of resources at the municipal level in order to alleviate poverty. Third, investments funded by the program have been of satisfactory quality and less costly than those executed by public agencies" (V6, p. 21). Particular recognition has been given to production and infrastructure projects which allow beneficiaries to take better advantage of opportunities arising for profitable activities.

A recent innovation consists in emphasizing **a strong productive investment focus**, no longer as a support measure, but rather as a main project feature. Under decentralization, then, the idea is to furnish municipalities and town councils with the means to develop this type of investment, so that they can provide rural communities with **flexible technology packages, manufacturing and marketing activities, production diversification, and support for communications infrastructure** works.

Teams are engaged at FAO in finding ways to extend analysis of the role of municipalities in the promotion of sustainable, participatory development.<sup>(28)</sup> The context created by **structural adjustment policies** (liberalization, deregulation, privatization, the increased focus on markets in terms of resource allocation), represents an important framework for understanding the emergence of this municipal approach to development action. From the political point of view, we are witnessing **widespread democratization** and strong demands for participation and decentralization., which imply a **strengthening of local administrations**. Municipalities are increasingly being seen as areas to focus on to develop new rural development strategies in the context of decentralization.

This implies a strengthening of local government institutions, such as **municipalities**, to enable them to establish dynamic links with the needs expressed by communities, and to build a dialog between the co-ordination functions being transferred back to them and the needs and demands of their populations Decentralization should **delegate considerable decision-making power to municipalities**, as local authorities, and to other local government bodies.

The delegation of functions to municipalities has been impeded by the fact that it arose more as a response to budgetary problems faced by central governments than as a reflection of a desire to strengthen them as decision-making authorities which promote local development. This opens up an area of analysis and experience, namely: "**the identification of possible actions by rural municipalities and clarification of subjects on which their participation should be decisive/exclusive, complementary, or restricted to promotion, follow-up and supervision**" (III1, p. 5).

It is a matter, in particular, of identifying the real action potential of rural municipalities, in terms of support services for small farmers and social services for poor populations, but also of asking about the ways in which they can fulfil these functions, while involving local populations. In general terms, **municipalities should be responsible for promoting an institutional environment which encourages an organized, systematic and sustained participation by the local population in municipal, regional and state programs and projects**.

Under decentralization, municipalities are increasingly responsible for rural development activities. It is, therefore, necessary to train specialist municipal staff in these new functions and the techniques which will permit them to formulate their programs in conjunction with the populations. " A minimum of skills must be developed in the municipalities so that specific economic projects can be formulated and evaluated and the production dimension of local initiatives supported" (III2, p. 6). At the same time, however, the importance of co-ordination between rural municipalities and other levels of administration must also be recognized.

Thus, municipalities could become the basic geographical level at which **private and public initiatives relating to rural development are articulated and managed**, opening up the way to what one could term the **municipalization of rural development**. A number of conditions must be satisfied in order for the municipalization of rural development to forge ahead:

1. Actions in each municipality must result from a decision by the communities concerned, and be supervised by them;
2. The development of primary activities must feature as a separate action in municipal development plans;

3. The majority of seat on rural development municipal councils must be held by representatives of civil society;
4. A mechanism for co-ordination with higher levels of government must exist.
5. There must be technical support and training for services which must be assumed by the municipalities;
6. Regional bodies must exist to co-ordinate and oversee actions determined by the municipalities.
7. There must be co-financing mechanisms to supplement resources mobilized by the municipalities with public, international and private funding.

Once these conditions have been fulfilled, " the municipality (will be able to emerge) as a body which channels and triggers initiatives and energy within the community itself, which lends structure to and articulates social life, assumes responsibility for managing and resolving conflict and local public problems, and which opens up areas and opportunities for carrying out participatory development" (III2, p. 27).

FAO projects aimed at bolstering municipalities may become an experience which serves to underpin decentralization and local governance, insofar as they accept that the new state-market-civil society articulation can only be set up within the framework of a local, intensive process of transformation of local levels into true poles of rural development.

## B) The capacity of local government levels to become true poles of rural development

In order to identify and enhance the development potential of local levels of government, FAO teams have initiated a project in Bolivia, the initial stage of which is the identification of the most dynamic intermediate regions and towns. A study is then conducted into the factors which explain their dynamic nature, and which could permit them to become rural development poles. Finally, the study analyzes **the services and support which FAO could furnish to government to assist it in strengthening the dynamism of these towns.**<sup>(29)</sup>

In Bolivia, one can observe a **pattern of behavior which justifies the proposal on intermediate towns:** ""i) a close correlation between an agricultural market economy and urbanization; ii) greater poverty in areas where agriculture is more traditional and which are furthest removed from cities; iii) the existence of sub-regional areas with varying growth rates, which means that **development potential** is not to be found just anywhere and cannot be simply the sum total of areas in a region, but rather that it only occurs in areas characterized by certain conditions: **population settlements undergoing demographic growth** (expanding markets), which are **integrated in a hierarchical urban system** (regular financial and productive flows); **means of access and communications facilities**; availability of **land which is suitable for production activities**; existence of **urban manufacturing and services activities** and, finally, the presence of a number of intermediate towns with growth rates above the national average, which implies a migratory influx, and absorption of a percentage of the rural migrants thanks to their social, financial and/or production advantages" (VIII9, pp. 103-104). **"The existence of second and third level towns** with considerable **growth dynamics**, with potential for **articulation with other population settlements of a different size**, occupying a **strategic location in the region**, are all urban development advantages which have hardly been studied or acted upon for the purposes of rural development" (VIII9, p. 105). In other words, intermediate urban development may be a sustainable alternative to rural development, since this type of intermediate towns can **receive the investment** needed to boost the growth potential of primary activities (manufacturing and services) and become **the principal market** for agricultural produce. Intermediate towns also provide **alternatives for rural migrants, without any loss of human capital from the region.**

The aim, therefore, of this type of program is to promote a process of peasant accumulation in the framework of a boosting of urban-rural trade at regional and sub-regional levels. The main lines of action are support for the marketing of peasant produce, development of their bargaining capacity vis-à-vis markets, support for the development of manufacturing activities in second and third level towns, and assistance in regulating the flow of migrants from the country to the city, by seeking to direct them to second-level towns.

If **the idea is to allocate a more central role to local levels of government, work in this direction must be supplemented by a training program on development planning** at regional and local levels, aimed at strengthening local planning capacity so as to enable these levels to achieve a enhanced integration in the decentralization process. This is fundamental to the advancement of the decentralization process. The question remains of knowing what would be the best division of powers between State and local communities, and how to clarify the areas of responsibility of each jurisdiction. This also implies solving the finance issue: the transfer of costs implies a financial transfer and a reinforcement of the funding capacity of local communities. These questions raise, in general terms, the problem of co-ordination between national and local areas, the need to build interfaces between these levels and, hence, the problem of the role of the region under decentralization.

### C) The building of interfaces between national and local levels of government

The strengthening of local levels of government and their possible transformation into true poles of rural development both call for local capacity to make decisions and assume responsibilities, which can only be **assured through** the three types of **decentralization**: the decentralization of support services (regionalization of the State), delegation of decision-making powers to local authorities (differentiated interventions), and the devolution and transfer of decision-making power and financial responsibilities to local government institutions, which are elected by populations (the municipalization of development).

The selection of geographical communities **as the location for development initiatives** is justified since the linkage with local government structures is essential, because it is once this is achieved that it will become possible to **truly and sustainably integrate grassroots communities** and organisations in society in a coherent political whole, and link them with a system in which they can **express themselves and participate**. The development strategies proposed as a result of FAO's experiences, are based on the concept of **partnership**. The concept implies a number of development characteristics which should be clarified.

1. The first characteristic is acknowledgement that local partners play a central role in defining and executing development programs. This implies the need to negotiate the objectives and ways to implement the programs with them.
2. The second characteristic is the **main focus on the local level**, as the place for initiatives and decisions. This level is no longer the point of implementation, but the **place for initiatives** by local partners. "Local development only occurs, on the one hand, when contractual relations are established between villagers and other local partners and, on the other, when **negotiated relations are created between local partners and other levels of economic and political decision-making**" (VI5, p. 188).
3. The third characteristic is acknowledgement of the need to incorporate a **short-medium-long-term** sequence into development programs to ensure that "actions are swiftly taken which can assist in solving immediate, urgent constraints, and that the short-term program acts as an aid for reflection at local level making it possible to determine long-term directions and a medium-term action plan" (VI5, p. 188).

Now, the augmented role of local partners under decentralized development, does not mean that the State no longer has an important role to play: it should, in particular, make certain that actions performed are consistent with each other. This calls for **interfaces to be built between local and national levels which are capable of incorporating the needs and initiatives expressed at grassroots level, on the one hand, and trends, constraints and co-ordination at country level, on the other**.

The regional level offers both an opportunity and a requirement for mediation between a pure supply-driven philosophy and one that is demand led (the first risk of decentralization), which makes it possible to envisage arbitration or readjustment. It can also make available information on the institutional, economic and technological environment to rural populations, and permit them effectively to participate in policy formulation. **In this way, the region can become the place for autonomous action and initiatives by rural populations and local levels of government.**

"Decentralization, which provides a new balance between supply and demand for support and facilitates a more equitable sharing of information, and hence, decision-making, also carries with it restrictions. These are, on the one hand, the risks of diluting action, difficulty in achieving co-ordination, and a partial view of problems which need to be solved. This being the case, it would seem logical for the region - as optimum location for mediation - to be the interface between local development and macro-economic instruments. The region, therefore, can become an **area in which there is an intersection between, on the one hand, rural development agents with an overall approach and a global policy provision and, on the other, the partners who are knowledgeable about local conditions and have a specific demand for support projects and programs**. This intersection is the natural location for a decentralized formulation of a rural development strategy and the formulation of strategic frameworks" (VIII3, p. 2-3).

The region is the place in which the specific features observed at grassroots community level can be incorporated. The region is also the place where dialog with the different partners takes place in proximity to rural populations and their concerns, while also facilitating comparison with national dimensions and demands.

Recognition of the role of these interfaces has led FAO to support trends towards a structuring of the rural environment and sector through **regionalization**. This is viewed as a dynamic means of integrating the strengthening of the local level and State disengagement. In this relatively new approach, a more precise definition is still required of boundaries both between and within regional and local levels. In order to further advance in this analysis, a proposal was made to set up a network for exchanging information and support in the form of an information scheme for rural Mediterranean communities.<sup>(30)</sup> By breaking the isolation of rural communities, this scheme can allow them to reduce waiting times, enhance the quality of decisions and diminish social costs.

The **areas** covered by the scheme would be in line with the trends towards a transfer of responsibility to communities and an enhancement of their management capacity, investment programming; current short- and long-term management; sharing responsibilities with the State and other partners; structures desired by the communities and available resources.

A similar initiative is a comparative study of decentralization processes of rural development procedures in the countries of the Maghreb and Sahel.<sup>(31)</sup> The study analyzed rural sector management methods, interfaces between central and local levels and, in particular, the role of the regional level within this overall problem - all from the standpoint of current trends regarding decentralization, varying degrees of involvement of populations and their organizations, and the nascent sharing of responsibilities between central government and regional and local authorities.

An as yet unresolved issue is the question of defining regions under decentralization. Should account be taken of natural criteria, or criteria concerning administrative or ethnic uniformity? Or, alternatively, should an identification be made of systems constituted by towns and their surrounding districts? The concept of a region which best suits the building of interfaces is one which views it as an area of social cohesion and a network of inter-connections, which furnish it with its identity and with unity.

The second issue concerns the institutional conditions which allow the regions to act as interface, namely the strengthening of local and regional planning bodies; special assistance for least favored regions; expansion of fiscal resource allocation; reinforcement of regions' resource utilisation capacity; co-ordination bodies and the recognition and promotion of local rural development initiatives.

## THE RED-IFO DECENTRALISATION MODEL

An attempt has been made to provide a summary in order to link consideration of the risks posed by decentralization, on the one hand, and, on the other, the advantages, experiences and knowledge which the different FAO services have built up. Thanks to this summary, it is possible to propose **a tailored decentralization methodology and a set of support policies** which are fundamental to the success of decentralization. Hence, it represents an ordering of FAO's different lines of action and focuses into a **participatory decentralization model**, called the **RED-IFO model**.

The objective of the model, which comprises two parts, is to deal with the risks posed by decentralization. The first consists of a decentralization methodology, based on the regionalization of the needs of rural populations and policy differentiation (risk 1). The second part proposes three support policies: information (risk 2), training (risk 3) and organisation (risk 4). One of the model's principal components is dialog (this offers a form of solving risk 5).

### 1. Decentralization methodology: demand regionalization and policy differentiation (RED)

In order to avoid the first risk posed by decentralization (that of a supply philosophy being simply replaced by one that is demand driven), the RED-IFO model suggests the construction of an **intersection area between rural development partners with a global philosophy and policy supply** (international organizations and states), on the one hand, and the **partners with knowledge of local circumstances and a specific demand for support projects and programs** (rural populations, NGOs, the private sector) on the other. This interface is the natural area for the decentralized formulation of a rural development strategy.

In other words, in order for the State's policy supply not to be too global, there is a need to be able to **differentiate policies and, therefore, obtain typologies of producers and regions**, which would permit the institutional instruments which are best suited to each type of producer, product and region to be identified. However, at the same time, in order to treat rural populations' demands (which are necessarily specific and local) consistently, it is necessary to **regionalize the needs and wishes** of rural populations in order to give them a wider impact.

From a rural development perspective, the aim of differentiated policies would be to allow each type of producer or each type of target group for institutional interventions, to have access to the assets they require in order to implement economic and social integration strategies. The goal would be to assist them in developing the assets which they have, while providing them with access to other assets which, together, would allow them to achieve enhanced market integration. In any event, in rural development terms, it is a matter of supporting efforts by rural populations to augment their development levels and the degree of maturity of their organizations. Two main types of policies would be accepted and diversified:

1. Policies for the most underprivileged population. These are well targeted policies whose rural development impact, however, may be limited, given the quantity and quality of the resources which the target population has at its disposal. To a greater extent, these are targeted social policies for combating poverty. They are not designed to set rural development in motion, but rather to assist the poorest to institute strategies to improve their situation.

2. Appropriate, differentiated policies for social groups with a real potential to become a launch-pad for a rural development strategy, which can generate employment, income and a diversification of agricultural and non-agricultural revenue. The RED-IFO decentralization model has been proposed to guarantee an adaptation and diversification of policies for this type of rural producers. This model would make it possible to: i) support organization processes so that farmers' organizations can attain a higher level of maturity; ii) create means by which this type of producer can access strategic environmental information, and iii) support training processes, in order to ensure that rural populations themselves assume responsibility for rural development action.

A decentralized, differentiated policy which responds to regional demands, should give priority to instruments which, by their very nature, may be more readily targeted to suit the specific problems of each type of producer or region. From this point of view, it would be more effective to utilize direct support for labour capital, infrastructure investment, the creation of new production or manufacturing procedures, or even to finance consumption by most underprivileged producers. Given that a tradition does not exist which would make it possible to work with differentiated, region-specific policies, FAO's role can be very important, since it supports institutional restructuring aimed at developing differentiated policies and provides supply methodologies for drawing up producer typologies, and technical assistance for regional demand analysis. It is in this general framework of differentiation and regionalization, therefore, that support policies for decentralization should be devised and implemented.

## 2. **Support policies: information, training and organization (IFO)**

Under this model three policies are deemed essential to supplement the regional analysis and differentiation methodology of the RED-IFO decentralization model and create the necessary conditions for participation by rural populations in the decentralization process: i) access to information; ii) training and iii) support for the organization of rural populations. FAO has built up a wealth of experience in these three spheres.

### A) The role of access to information in dialog with the State

A lack of or imbalance in information between the development partners does not facilitate co-ordination of activities or a global analysis of local demands. If this risk is to be averted, decentralization must be accompanied by a two-pronged information policy: i) **production of information relevant to a rural development strategy and ii) the creation of conditions for a continuous flow of information among all rural development partners**, including local levels of government. Information, and a balanced distribution thereof are a condition for dialog between the States and the rural development partners, without which a truly participatory development strategy cannot be achieved.

In fact, in order for a true dialog to be created between the development partners, common ground for such a dialog must exist, or, in other words, the partners must have at their disposal the same quantity and quality of information on institutional, macro-economic and technological constraints and opportunities, market developments, comparative advantages for products and regions, as well as on any complementarity between the member countries of a sub-regional trading bloc.

Therefore, information production and flows play a dual role: i) **they grant rural populations a degree of control over development actions and ii) they ensure the global consistency of actions, since rural populations would have information stretching**

**beyond their local conditions and circumstances.** This is a priority in order to provide the economic, technological and participatory content to decentralization.

B) Training as a means of avoiding institutional vacuums

In order to prevent decentralization producing a diminished supply of support services, it is necessary for the transfer of functions to be accompanied by a transfer of powers to local levels of government, as well as to rural populations and their organizations. It is only through such a transfer of powers that the execution of decentralized functions can be guaranteed. Following a long period of paternalism and strong intervention by the central State, which blocked the autonomous action capacity of rural populations, **technical skills for other development partners must be created or reinforced.**

The demand for training is also of decisive importance given that **the capacity for formulating demands is not equally distributed** across the different municipalities and producers' organizations. In fact, such a capacity hinges upon the prior accumulation of social capital and specific organisational experience. In this respect, in the absence of a very strong training policy, decentralization may benefit the richest, best organised local communities and organizations, simply because they are the ones with greatest capacity to formulate their demands in terms of development projects. **Training, therefore, should be geared as a matter of priority towards municipalities and rural organisations with a weak demand-formulating capacity.**

Support for these communities and organizations in the shape of **training for the formulation of profitable, business-focused, production projects**, may be a priority sphere of action for collaboration between states and international organizations, but also for **the promotion of partnership relations with the private sector and the experimental use of a rural development approach which emphasizes access to productive, human resource, and organizational and network assets.** FAO has gained a certain amount of experience with regard to the organization of exchanges between institutions in civil society aimed at permitting them to enhance their participation in decentralization processes and strengthening local levels of government.

Lack of preparation to deal with the challenges of decentralization does not affect only producers. Even local level State officials do not always have the necessary skills to lead the dialog with policy beneficiaries, accustomed as they have been to only implementing policy lines determined above, and in whose formulation they have not participated.

C) Organization and mediation mechanisms

Availability of relevant, global information, as well as training and the transfer of powers form the first obstacles to a possible appropriation of decentralization by local elites. These curbs may be insufficient if rural populations do not have the strength of organization needed to take part in policy design, implementation and evaluation. This is why the third decentralisation support policy put forward by the RED-IFO model is **support for existing organizations and, in certain cases, the creation of intermediate associations and recognition of the latter as the State's favored dialog-partners, through the creation of a legal framework to encourage participation.** The importance of organization is multi-dimensional.

Organization can, firstly, guarantee that decentralization in its different forms is more a **response to a real demand for participation** on the part of the rural populations than a policy decided upon and formulated from above, in centralized fashion. Thus, the objectives,

forms and pace of the decentralization policy could be defined and negotiated with the beneficiaries of decentralization themselves.

Next, organization may be a condition for the success of decentralization since it can lead to **endogenous innovations** which allow intermediate associations to actively participate in the differentiation and regionalization of policies. It is by organizing that producers can bring about development for themselves, since it permits them either to create or strengthen their capacity to appropriate previously centralized functions.

Finally, organization is important to decentralization strategy because the latter's success is dependent on the creation of **local and regional conflict-mediation structures**, which enable social pressure to be channelled into the definition of development projects and programs. **Decentralized mediation mechanisms can afford a means of structuring demands and summarising them in a rural development strategy.**

However, **institutional weakness on the part of the State and/or rural organizations** can only lead to **the failure of mediation**. Without mediation, there can be neither consensus, nor a strategy for viable, sustainable, participatory rural development, nor a general framework of dynamic relations between the rural development agents. Now, mediation conditions do not always exist; they should be created through dialog, proximity to specific situations, and creating an awareness on the part of the State that it can improve the effectiveness of its actions **if it sees the rural organization not as an obstacle to its intervention but as a means of capturing demands for intervention**. In this way, the organisation can help to build the concept of economic and social citizenship, and develop a new relationship between the State and the intermediate associations made up of dialog, mediation and partnerships.

## LINKS BETWEEN DECENTRALIZATION AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT

### A. Conclusions and recommendations

1. The organization of a well-conceived decentralization process should recognise the existence of institutional actors other than the central State, endowed with their own organizations and financial autonomy, as well as structures led by elected bodies, to which responsibilities are transferred under decentralization. Since there is no sense in recognizing them if they are not afforded the right and the means of expressing themselves, decentralization implies participation, and vice versa.
2. From the point of view of grassroots geographical communities, decentralization is dependent upon three fundamental conditions: "i) recognition of the moral status of groups other than the central State with particular interests summarised in the concept of local affairs; ii) recognition of the community's right to manage its own affairs, through the intermediary of bodies designated by it; iii) State control over geographical communities' organisations and actions, which respects the community's autonomy, yet prevents it from going beyond its sphere of competence and jurisdiction" (IV10, p. 1).
3. In political terms, decentralization is seen as a deepening of the democratization process and, therefore, as a special type of "**sharing power**", notably decision-making power. This concept does not imply a reduction in the power of the State, but rather a **means "of laying the foundations for a more operational, efficient State**, that will act as guardian of the general interest, while fuelling, encouraging, stimulating and protecting the implementation of local initiatives for which the new decentralized institutions will enjoy decision-making power" (IV10, p. 2).
4. From the economic point of view, decentralization **acts in conjunction with local partners, providing them with the means to develop**, whether they be NGOs, community associations, producers' organisations or other co-operative groups. They all benefit from decentralization since it permits them to fully utilise their powers and initiatives.
5. Through decentralization, the State starts to mobilise and facilitate local development initiatives proposed by grassroots communities. The underlying idea behind economic reforms and decentralization is the same: to release initiatives so that they are able to satisfy their particular interests. This does not resolve the problem of how to guarantee fulfilment of the general interest, but demand regionalization and policy differentiation can offer a means to do so.
6. Too often, participatory development projects have meant the re-emergence of local elites, who assume representation of populations in order to organize, lead and, to a certain extent, appropriate for themselves decentralized, participatory approaches. From the very moment when decentralization is conceived, counterbalances and mechanisms to correct this trend towards the predominance of local authorities over local populations must be set in place. The main mechanisms for curbing this trend are the support policies proposed under the RED-IFO model.
7. **The contractual, partnership approach** is aimed at creating new relations between rural development partners, to replace vertical relations based on strategies defined in isolation from local dynamics which lack a regional overview. It would be advisable to extend and enhance this approach.

8. The first area in which dialog and consultations between the State and intermediate associations should be put into practice concerns **the pace of decentralization**. This pace must not be too swift so that the beneficiaries of decentralization can adapt. Yet, it should not be too slow either, since this would give the forces which are not interested in decentralization time to mobilize against it and bring it to an end. When it comes to determining the pace of decentralization, it is necessary to recognize that differing regional situations, production conditions and strategies by each category of producer, form constraints which require decentralization to be carried out on the basis both of multiple consultations between national and local actors and a regionalization of the results of the dialog based on consideration of the views of intermediate associations. This would make it possible to adjust the pace of decentralization to suit the individual capacity of each region, municipality and category of producer to assume and perform the decentralized functions.
9. Decentralization, then, should be understood as a **gradual process of transferring functions, resources and decision-making powers** from the State to intermediate associations and local levels of government, at a pace which the strengthening of the intermediate associations and the creation and consolidation of the instruments which the latter endow themselves with as they develop, permit. Clearly, the need for a gradual pace of decentralization also influences the timetable for transferring finance sources and mechanisms for the decentralized functions. In this respect, each body which has been assigned a decentralized function or action should, in the medium-term, gain complete financial independence in order to be able to carry it out fully.
10. The decentralization methodology (regionalization/differentiation), and its support policies are incompatible with a centralized State which considers itself as the sole development partner (an active supplier of strategies and services), and populations merely as passive beneficiaries of its policies. By comparison, with differentiation and regionalization the underlying supposition is that dialog occurs between partners whose operating philosophies are different. **Centralized State institutions must give way to new institutions which are capable of creating conditions for dialog between producer organizations and the other rural development agents**. However, it is equally necessary for these new institutions not to be - as in the past - the fruit of a design by the central State to provide information, training and organisational assistance to rural populations, but, rather, **the brain child of rural populations themselves, who provide representative, technical structures for themselves in order that they can engage in a dialog with all their partners**. This is why **the RED-IFO' model's strategic thrust consists in creating, reorganizing or strengthening intermediate associations**. The role of the latter is, therefore, fundamental, for three main reasons: i) they can guide State action by means of policy differentiation which must accompany decentralization; ii) they provide a capacity for summarizing and regionalizing rural populations' demands and desires; and iii) they can eventually gain sufficient maturity as agents to be able to forge partnerships with other rural development partners.
11. During the decentralization process, these intermediate associations will be encouraged to perform five functions, which are important to note.
  - Policy differentiation and demand regionalization are aimed at taking account of the specific problems facing each type of producer, region and branch. It is, therefore, necessary for intermediate associations to have access to information about each of these three categories, so as to be able to present proposals on the desired content of the differentiated policies.

- Intermediate associations shall **identify the specific problems which exist for each agricultural and non-agricultural activity in its different stages**: credit, supply of inputs, production, manufacturing and packaging, and marketing and distribution. The intermediate associations would be in a position to identify the training needs arising from these problems, transmit information, and establish a dialog with a view to making known the constraints and potential of each activity.
- In order to prepare for dialog with the State and the other rural development partners, and **present proposals regarding the general thrust of rural development**, intermediate associations must have, and be able to provide rural producers with, global, relevant information on the economic, institutional and technological environment in which the rural populations are located. This task consists in classifying and collating information on: i) State standardization and regulation; ii) the comparative advantages of each region and branch in terms of the national situation and global markets; iii) market changes regarding leading products and price modifications; iv) availability of alternative technology for production specialization/diversification and technological modernization, and v) new income-generating activities.
- A function which intermediate associations should perform is to **assist in strengthening rural populations' skills** in order to permit them to execute decentralized actions, and also to build productive partnerships with the private sector and derive maximum benefit from the skills of NGOs. The basis for the performance of this function must be a strong local presence which allows them to tailor their response to the circumstances and specific problems of each type of producer and type of region.
- Finally, apart from providing a framework for consultations between producers themselves, the intermediate associations should **foster types of dialog with local levels of government**, in order to curb trends towards clientelism and the appropriation of decentralization by local authorities. This dialog could take the form of consultation committees, which would be the main forum for dialog between these associations and local levels of government. At the same time, they would make it possible to deal with the specific problems of each branch in a concerted manner and to clearly and coherently present demands for support to the State and other rural development partners.

12. These organizational efforts on the part of the intermediate associations would make it possible to achieve an overall implementation of the decentralization process and of rural development action on the basis of a **continuous dialog among all the rural development agents**. In this way, the regional interface would gradually become the arena for mediation and arbitration, thanks to its creation of instruments for consultation and participation for rural populations at all levels.

#### **B. Directions for pursuing analysis of and research into decentralization and its links with rural development**

1. There is a growing consensus today that the rural sector has a decisive, crucial role to play in attaining the objectives of food security, poverty alleviation and enhancement of natural resource management. It has also been recognized that decentralization can improve the effectiveness of action aimed at developing this sector. But consensus is not enough. An institutional mechanism must be created in every nation and at every level to allow this consensus to be transformed into sustainable, participatory rural development. The goal of the RED-IFO model is to explain to the rural development agents the risks,

opportunities and conditions for the success of a decentralisation policy, drawing on the experiences and knowledge which FAO has built up. The cornerstone of the model is the creation of conditions which will enable populations to participate in the selection and implementation of action which will determine their future.

2. In order to succeed, decentralization must be a general process encompassing all forms of public intervention, including a revision of the legal framework of each country. With respect to the rural sector, in particular, the major challenge posed by decentralization is how to manage the tension between recognition for community, local initiatives and the need to integrate these initiatives to form a whole. Differentiation, regionalization and the strengthening of intermediate associations can help to resolve this tension. These three instruments create conditions for dialog among the rural development partners.
3. The RED-IFO model recognizes that all the potential inherent in decentralization can only be harnessed if it is closely linked to a strengthening of democracy as a system for the expression of interests, conflict and mediation. The transition from a supply to a demand philosophy can, therefore, be achieved: i) through the impetus of policy beneficiaries; ii) if decentralization does not create vacuums, and iii) by forging a global, coherent, participatory strategy, with an inclusive philosophy of production specialisation, technological modernization and comparative-advantage creation, and which does not only benefit the strongest, best organized agents. What is proposed, therefore, is the creation of a new alliance for sustainable, viable, participatory rural development, in which rural populations play a full part in "extending rural markets, savings and investment, three key-factors in any rural development process."<sup>(32)</sup>
4. Such a new alliance would make it possible to move from a social approach to rural development to a policy of identifying and effectively utilising profitable, production activities, which are not only agricultural, in the rural areas. Thus, one priority could be a search for economic alternatives and a broadening of options available to rural populations.
5. In the final analysis, the conditions required for decentralization imply that what is outside the center - the periphery - which is the focus for decentralization, is strong and dynamic, so that its partners can receive the functions and actions which are decentralized to them. The three focuses and different lines of action carried out by FAO all seem to be oriented in this direction. The resultant decentralization model seeks to facilitate conditions for a redirection of human and financial resources towards rural areas and, within these, to the most deprived populations. This implies acknowledgement that "investing in the sustainable development of agricultural potential, forests and fishing will cost much less in the long-term than solving the social problems caused by lack of rural development".<sup>(33)</sup>
6. FAO has long been arguing for the implementation of participatory rural development strategies and systematically has sought to incorporate the most suitable mechanisms into its projects and programs to guarantee such participation, while ensuring the restructuring of rural development institutions. These projects and programs are built on the principle that decentralization should make it possible for the effectiveness of the State to be augmented, inasmuch as its support services are close to producers' needs. This improves the effective match between these services and production requirements, which is made possible by local assessments by those with the most relevant information. It should also be underlined that a structural legacy of centralized rural development policies exists, which should be taken into account when identifying the risks posed by decentralization. It is precisely by taking into consideration these risks that it has been possible to identify an appropriate decentralization methodology and a set of support policies which are

fundamental to the success of decentralization. This methodology stresses the need for particular efforts to be made to create and strengthen intermediate associations which represent the entire rural population, and whose role would be to serve as the linchpin for dialog between the State and the other rural development partners.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

---

I.1 TCP/NER/2335 (T), Formation à une approche participative en milieu forestier, Juillet 1994

I.2 MAU/88/002 PNUD/FAO, La vulgarisation participative en Mauritanie, Octobre 1992

I.3 MAU/88/002 PNUD/FAO, La vulgarisation participative: texte méthodologique, Avril 1991

I.4 PNUD/FAO/ZAI/88/006, Vers une vulgarisation participative. Étude de cas: Le Zaïre, Mai 1996

I.5 PNUD/FAO/ZAI/96/002, Spécial système de vulgarisation, Avril 1996

I.6 TCP/IVC/2355, Le système national de recherche agronomique de la Côte d'Ivoire: analyse de la situation présente et propositions de stratégie pour le long terme, 1994

---

II.1 KAWALEC A., Approche de gestion des ressources naturelles/gestion de terroirs villageois en Afrique occidentale, 1995

II.2 MARA, Les grandes orientations en matière de gestion des terroirs au Burkina Faso, Mai 1995

II.3 BKF/94/005, Gestion des terroirs : appui à la concertation/coordination, juin 1995 (3 tomes)

II.4 FAO, L'approche gestion des terroirs, 1992

II.5 DURAND A., La gestion locale des ressources naturelles au centre du développement rural, Décembre 1993

II.6 FAO/FIDA, Projet de développement rural dans les provinces de la Bougouriba et du poni, rapport de préparation, 1995

---

III.1 FAO, New institutional arrangements for agricultural and rural development in the region, August-september 1994

III.2 FAO, Municipalidad rural, participación popular e instituciones en servicios de apoyo a pequeños agricultores en Latinoamérica, 1993

---

IV.1 FAO, Training for decentralised planning: lessons from experience, 1987

IV.2 FAO, Planification du développement d'une zone rurale, 1992 (Version en anglais de 1990)

IV.3 FAO, Linkages between policy analysis, national planning and decentralized planning for rural development, 1988

IV.4 FAO, Training manual on decentralized planning (district level), Nepal, 1990

IV.5 FAO, Approche méthodologique et démarche de la restructuration des institutions du développement rural, 1993

IV.6 FAO, Restructuration des institutions du développement rural Cas du Bénin, 1993

IV.7 FAO, Restructuration des institutions du développement rural Cas de la Côte d'Ivoire, 1993

IV.8 FAO, Organization and management of agricultural support services for small farmers in Latin America and the Caribbean, 1991

IV.9 FAO, Organisation and management of agricultural services for small farmers in Asia, 1992

IV.10 BKF/94/005, Les enjeux de la décentralisation et les missions de la CND, 1995

---

V.1 DE LA TAILLE, Special programme on food production in support of food security: constraint-related activities, Octobre 1995

V.2 SPFP/DOC/4-REV.1, Special programme on food production in support of food security in LIFDCs (SPFP): rationale, objectives and approach, February 1996

V.3 FAO, The group enterprise resource book, 1995

V.4 FAO/BANCO MUNDIAL/SAGAR/OAXACA, Proyecto de desarrollo sostenible en zonas rurales marginadas: zonas mixe y mazateca/cuicateca de Oaxaca, 1995

V.5 WORLD BANK, Memorandum and recommendation for a rural poverty alleviation project, April 1995

V.6 SONN L./VAN ZYL J./PARKER A., Implementing decentralized rural development: lessons from northeast Brazil, S/D

V.7 FAO, The NRDPs and follow-up projects: distinguishing features, S/D

V.8 FAO, The three delivery mechanisms under the RPAPs: who does what in the community subproject cycle, S/D

---

VI.1 GCP/RAF/276/ITA, Synthèse des travaux de l'atelier de formation sur l'approche participative, Mai 1993

VI.2 GUI/86/004, Organisation du développement rural sur une base globale et participative: l'expérience du Fouta Djallon en Guinée, Mai 1993 (version en anglais aussi), Septembre 1993

VI.3 FO:DP/NER/90/016, Évaluation et capitalisation des méthodes d'intervention en matière d'environnement sur les projets NER/90/016 et NER/89/004: Communication et participation, Juillet 1993

VI.4 DUFUMIER M., Stratégies pour un développement durable des systèmes de production agricole en Afrique sahélienne et soudanienne, Mars 1993

VI.5 FAO/CIRAD/CTA, Promotion de systèmes agricoles durables dans les pays d'Afrique soudano-sahélienne, Janvier 1994

---

VII.1 FAO, Participation et risques d'exclusion: réflexions à partir de quelques exemples sahéliens, 1995

VII.2 WORLD BANK, Sourcebook on participation, Décembre 1994

VII.3 FAO, Planification participative des ressources humaines dans le secteur agricole, Décembre 1994

VII.4 FAO, Participation populaire au développement rural: le plan d'action de la FAO, 1992

VII.5 FAO, FAO People's participation programme - the first ten years: lessons learned and future directions, 1990

VII.6 FAO, The effect of group formation on rural women's access to services: the PPP experience in Western province, Zambia, 1996

VII.7 FAO/Netherlands/Sri Lanka Project, Experiences with people's participation programmes, 1995

VII.8 MCKEON N., Forum national "quel avenir pour le paysan sénégalais? Étude de cas coopérative FAO/ONG, 1993

VII.9 FAO, Freedom from hunger campaign/action for development (FFHC/AD) A brief historical review

VII.10 FAO, Forests, trees and people: phase II, S/D

VII.11 FAO, Women in community forestry, 1989

VII.12 FAO/FTP, Peasant participation in community reforestation, 1993

VII.13 HARCHARIK D., Las actividades forestales sociales: un componente esencial de la ordenación sostenible de los bosques, 1995

---

VIII.1 FAO, Regional planning for non-regional planners, 1991

VIII.2 FAO/SDA, CORUMED: proposition pour un réseau destiné aux élus et représentants des communautés rurales méditerranéennes, Mars 1996

VIII.3 DJEHICHE F./BONNAL J., L'interface développement local- cadres stratégiques: le rôle de la région. Forum sur le développement local à l'appui de la CCD, Juin 1996

- VIII.4 CCD/IFAD, Combattre la désertification? Un défi, d'abord local, lancé à l'espace et au temps, Juin 1996 (plus draft de mars 1996)
- VIII.5 PNUD, Réduction de la pauvreté, participation et meilleure gouvernance locale: le rôle du Fonds pour le développement communautaire et local, Août 1995
- VIII.6 CFDE, De la gestion de terroirs au développement local, 1994
- VIII.7 FAO, Haïti, Préparation de la restructuration des institutions de développement agricole, 1995
- VIII.9 FAO/PNUD/BOL/91/010, Agroindustria y pequeña agricultura: desarrollo agrícola asociado a ciudades intermedias, 1994
- VIII.10 SIC-TERROIRS/CIRAD-SAR/IRAM/CIEPAC, Les acteurs et leurs stratégies dans les projets de développement durable et participatif, 1995

## Footnotes

1. The service involved in this line of action is **AGSP** (J.C. DE GRANDI: Mali, Morocco), but other services also call for use of the production systems approach.
2. This experience permitted FAO, for example, to launch in 1993 a special action program for the development of sustainable, family farming systems (PAS/SPFD) aimed at contributing to the rapid development and consolidation of new rural development concepts and practices. See Juan Carlos DE GRANDI's contribution in this respect in VI5.
3. TCAS is the service involved in this line of action. Mrs Maria Grazia QUIETI and M. MAETZ have provided very interesting information about this aspect of FAO's work.
4. One interesting experiment in decentralized planning and training of agents has been conducted jointly by FAO and APROSAC (Agricultural Projects Service Centre) in Nepal as part of a training program for the study of agricultural and rural development projects (FAO/NEP/035/SWI). This process is presented in IV4.
5. See the presentation of the RED-IFO model in a later section of the report.
6. Numerous services have been involved in this type of direct institutional support, principally ESP, ESHA then SDAR (M. NADIR, L. MONTESI, J. BONNAL in Benin, Cote d'Ivoire, Togo, Guinea, Cambodia, etc...) or in interventions indirectly related to these processes.
7. See, for example, the rural development institutions' restructuring experiment in Benin, as part of the CARDERS' assessment project TCP/BRN/6755 and formulation of project BEN/87/024, financed by UNDP and executed by FAO. This experiment is presented in document IV6.
8. See, in particular, IV7, IV8 and IV9 and, in the specific case of agronomic research, I6.
9. The services involved in this line of action are **TCIL** (P. LUCANI: West Africa and L. SONN: north-east Brazil), **TCIR** (J. STREBELLE: Burkina Faso), **TCII** (J.M. CABALLERO: Mexico, Guatemala and Venezuela). Projects of this type have been conducted in Burkina Faso, Mali and Togo. The most extensive experience is that of Burkina Faso where progress has extended to the establishment of **Decision-making For**, in which rural populations can speak out on investment to be carried out at local level (see II2). II4 can also be consulted, since it reports on a certain number of VLM experiments in the Sahel, seen from the point of view of the methods and tools utilised in their execution. It should be noted that a recent variant of this approach in Latin America is the **promotion of projects aimed at developing productive activities**. For a long time FAO and the World Bank have been conducting experiments of this type in North-east Brazil under the rural development program and the new program to combat poverty in this region of Brazil.
10. See Philip ARDOUIN-DUMAZET's contribution in VI5.
11. Regarding co-ordination and consultations, see II3, which presents lessons from the Burkina Faso government's project concerning consultations and co-ordination in the land management projects, a project financed by UNDP and executed by FAO. In its preparatory stage, the project's aim was to define real needs for, necessary and operational conditions for consultations and co-ordination regarding land management.
12. See V6 on the experiment in north-east Brazil and V4 on the proposed project for Mexico.
13. The services involved in this line of action are **SDRE** (J. JALLADE: Zaire, Mauritania) with respect to extension work and **SDRR** (G. BEYE: Congo, Cote d'Ivoire) regarding the agronomic research plank.
14. The projects on which the following studies are based are project MAU/88/002 UNDP/FAO in the case of Mauritania (I2 and I3), and projects UNDP/FAO/ZAI/96/002 and UNDP/FAO/ZAI/88/006 in that of Zaire (I4 and I5).
15. See I3 for a description of the way this system operates in close intervention zones and diffuse intervention zones, as well as for an introduction to the different extension tools and their role in training.

16. See also I4 and I5 which describe the main features of the extension system in Zaire.
17. The services involved in this line of action are **SDAR** (J. ROUSE: Zambia, Sri Lanka; M. NADIR: Haiti, Togo; L. MONTESI: Benin, Cote d'Ivoire; J. BONNAL: Burkina Faso, Guinea, Morocco and Tunisia), **TCDN** ( N. MCKEON: Senegal) and **FONP** (K. ANDERSSON: Central America).
18. There is a vast documentation on these questions. It would be interesting to consult V3, VI1, VI3, VII5, VI2, VII6 and VII11 regarding the sub-topic building rural organisations; VII1, VII7, VII8 and VII9 on that of relations among the development agents, and VII2, VII3, VII4, VII10, VII12 and VII13 on that of peasant organisation.
19. The most interesting experiences are: i) Zambia and Sri Lanka, regarding PPPs (SDAR), ii) Senegal, for work with NGOs (TCDN), iii) Central America concerning the structuring of representative organisations and reinforcement of capacity for dialog between the State and rural communities both in terms of conflict solution and taking account of gender in the framework of projects for the local management of forestry resources (FONP).
20. See VII5 for an introduction to and assessment of PPPs on the 10th anniversary of these programs.
21. See VII5 for a more detailed discussion of technical aspects of the PPPs.
22. See VII6, which discusses a PPP project geared to the poorest in country areas, and with particular emphasis on women and the way they organised to carry out income-generating activities. See also VII11 on the role of women in forestry projects, in the framework of "Forestry for Local Community Development", a special FAO program, launched in 1977.
23. The following analysis is based on VII8 which discusses the possibilities for co-operation between FAO and NGOs provided by a collaborative initiative among several NGOs, the Senegalese government, the donor community and FAO, which acted as catalyst and provided technical support.
24. For the historical background to co-operation with NGOs see VII9.
25. For the contents of this action plan, see VII4.
26. See VII10, VII12 and VII13.
27. The services involved in this line of action are: **TCAR** (A. PEREZ: Bolivia, Ecuador, Peru, Chile and Mexico); **SDAR** (T. LINDEMANN: Bolivia and Argentina and J. BONNAL: Sahel and the Mediterranean).
28. See III1 and III2.
29. For a description of project FAO/UNDP/BOL/91/010 see VIII9.
30. The scheme covers seven Mediterranean countries: Spain, France, Greece, Italy, Morocco, Tunisia and Turkey. See VIII2.
31. Workshop in Praia (Cape Verde), May 1996.
32. FAO, Participation populaire au développement rural: le plan d'action de la FAO, Rome, 1992, p. .3.
33. FAO, Issues in rural poverty, employment and food security, World Summit for Social Development, Copenhagen, 6-12 March 1995, p. 1.

---