

**STREAM**



**Support to Regional Aquatic Resources Management**



**DFID NRSP Research Project R8100  
Investigating Improved Policy on Aquaculture Service Provision to Poor People  
March 2002 – May 2003**

## **A Review of Lessons Learnt in Enabling People's Participation in Policy-making Processes**

**In Association With  
Gramin Vikas Trust (GVT)**

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## Acronyms

CBO	Community-based Organization
CIDA	Canadian International Development Agency
CSP	Country Strategy Paper
DFID	Department for International Development (UK)
DFO	District Fisheries Office
DIP	Deliberative and Inclusive Processes
FSR	Farming Systems Research
GAD	Gender and Development
GVT	Gramin Vikas Trust
IGA	Income-generating Activity
LGO	Local Government Organization
LHA	Livelihoods Analysis
MDG	Millennium Development Goals
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NRSP	Natural Resources Systems Programme (DFID)
PATH	Program for Appropriate Technology in Health
PPA	Participatory Poverty Assessment
PRA	Participatory Rural Appraisal
PRS	Poverty Reduction Strategy
PRSP	Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper
RRA	Rapid Rural Appraisal
SHG	Self-Help Groups
SID	Society for International Development
STREAM	Support to Regional Aquatic Resources Management
UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations
WID	Women in Development

## Executive Summary

Development approaches are constantly evolving, acting on and utilizing lessons learnt from past experiences. As a result, “good governance” approaches are currently topical, an intrinsic component of which is how rural poor people can participate in policy-making processes. By reviewing lessons learnt, and considering these with examples from within and outside India, an indication can be given of the most appropriate ways to begin to affect policy, although it must be stressed that a specific blueprint will not be suggested. As will be seen, there are disagreements on how to approach this matter and it is likely that such decisions and approaches are context-specific and need to be adaptive, which explains why no definitive approach exists.

The concept of poor people gaining and developing a voice in policy decisions that concern them is a logical and obvious step forward in alleviating mistrust and promoting empowerment. Poor people should not just be the intended, yet passive, “beneficiaries”, but actual actors of development, with their concerns and ideas addressed as part of development processes. Factors which have been shown to facilitate this process include the supply of essential services and support, some form of citizen-based monitoring and evaluation, providing feedback, and attaining a level of accountability on the part of policy-makers. Furthermore, for people to have a voice in service provision, representation of a broad membership of recipients is required, as is coordination with other social groups. Additional findings suggest that the ability to access and utilize media – and an encouraging political framework that presents opportunities for poor people, such as governments being prepared to invest resources in outreach and extension – all have a positive influence on whether pro-poor services and support will be provided. The relocation of power, capacity and authority to poor people and local service providers is crucial. Local government is thus a key element, as it can be made downwardly accountable and is an existing, permanent institution. To be sustainable, representation of poor people must be institutionalized.

Additionally, the concept of participation must be understood and actively pursued. Participation in the formulation and implementation of poverty reduction strategies leads to more effective, better-developed policies and thus a reduction in poverty. It also facilitates the building of partnerships based on trust and consensus between government and society. Trust facilitates dialogue and ultimately cooperation towards a common goal. No standard template for participation exists; rather the process involves a diverse array of approaches which can incorporate information, inclusiveness, dissemination, collaboration, coordination and consultation, and range from political representation to participatory research.

However, participation needs to build upon existing political and governance structures, such as parliaments, to strengthen the representation of poor people in development processes. The creation of “parallel participatory processes”, i.e., those that are not integrated within already existing social, political and institutional structures, is usually ill-advised, as is a failure to incorporate community structures (e.g., wealth, social status and gender).

Consultation can be seen as a logical progression of the participatory approach. Crucially, it is a process rather than a one-off event and enables people to shift their thinking from the problem at hand to how programs support or weaken policy. Ways of working should be user-led, because academic and government professionals are perhaps not best suited to guide policy, with the real “experts” being poor people themselves. Grassroots organizations such as NGOs and LGOs (Local Government Organizations) need to develop collaborative

approaches and adjust their roles, from policing local people to enabling them and government staff, to be flexible and to learn through experimentation and reflection. However, it must not be assumed that citizens value direct participation over improved responsibility and services by providers. Hence, influencing policy change means taking steps towards “sitting at the table” where decisions are being made, where evidence of impact is required at the micro-level rather than through theoretical speculation.

Livelihoods analysis (LHA) can help identify appropriate “points of contact” between policies and the livelihoods strategies of poor people, effectively identifying appropriate entry points or areas of focus for policy change. From a consideration of these may come strategic planning documents such as Country Strategy Papers (CSP) or Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSP) which encourage realism with respect to the setting of goals and targets, as well as managing expectations both within countries and among development partners. It should also be acknowledged that people may have more pressing and important immediate priorities than participating in agencies’ development projects.

Turning to India and the Prajateerpu Jury approach, it has been learnt that development processes and practices must address immediate needs and fulfill intrinsic rights, while simultaneously fostering processes of development and allowing poor people’s voices to be heard. It was learnt that although development thinking is constantly evolving and today’s “hot topics” will no doubt be replaced by a set of new approaches, it is logical that listening to those people we intend to benefit is a fundamental guiding principle that never changes. It is a relatively simple idea, which even today seems to be overlooked or worse, deliberately ignored.

Policy change is difficult without the participation of multiple stakeholders and the building of trust among them. Feedback from stakeholders is intrinsic to this as one of the main inputs of consultation. It is vital that NGOs and local governments are closely correlated with rural poor groups and able to engage with them more readily by providing this service.

Achieving this will obviously require those involved to make considered decisions in a context-specific manner, rather than following a specific template or blueprint. As a consequence, none are outlined within this document. Rather, this is a review of current thinking combined with a consideration of specific case studies. A key finding is that agencies must both interact and listen to those they intend to benefit. Trust- and awareness-building, eventual empowerment and ultimate policy influence, all have to stem from this simple fact and there is no excuse for this to be overlooked or ignored.





## Introduction

The development of the world's rural poor people is in a troubled state (Ashley and Maxwell, 2001). According to the World Bank (2001), there is a crisis in governance and a loss in confidence in rural development projects. This is despite the presence of a wide range of institutions which could play an important, beneficial role on behalf of rural poor communities (Ashley and Maxwell, 2001; Pimbert and Wakeford, 2002a). This situation is said to have arisen due to the exclusion of poor people from the mechanisms of governance, such as the construction and implementation of policies designed to improve their livelihoods and lift them from the "poverty trap"<sup>1</sup>. Institutions – including state and local governments and central ministries – appear to be misunderstanding the needs of poor people, taking little opportunity to "hear their voices" and showing little accountability. Even though development agencies like to believe their programs are inclusive and accountable (Joshi and Moore, 2000), there is increasing discontent with development institutions among poor people (Pimbert and Wakeford, 2002a).

This potentially poses huge constraints and dilemmas for the development process itself, and for institutions that intend to serve marginalized poor people. At the World Summit for Social Development in 1995, governments committed themselves to elaborating national definitions, indicators and measurements of absolute poverty, and the formulation of national anti-poverty plans and strategies (UNDP, 2002). Yet after some years, there remain misunderstanding and mistrust as the UN, through its Millennium Development Goals (MDG), strives to address the many aspects of development, including halving the number of people living in poverty by 2015. Recent experience indicates that challenges still need to be met with respect to countries and development partners, including:

- Building capacity
- Opening up policy dialogue
- Aligning external assistance behind national strategies, and
- Integrating national poverty reduction strategies into budget priorities and implementation (World Bank and IMF, 2002).

This is part of a development trend stemming from the 1950s, when themes such as "modernization" and "green revolution" in the 50s and 60s developed into themes addressing "good governance", "decentralization", sector-wide approaches, and critiques of participatory approaches and poverty eradication in the 2000s (Ellis and Biggs, 2001) (see Figure 1).

The thinking behind "good governance" and participatory approaches is that people themselves should not just be the intended beneficiaries, but also the actors of development (Amalric, 2001), enabling them to meet not only their present but also future needs through developed skills, knowledge, infrastructure and management. It is therefore reasonable to propose that beneficiaries should have their say in policy changes that may be needed to

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<sup>1</sup> A lack of money or material possessions such that a person is unable to meet the basic needs necessary for survival. The definition of poverty varies depending on the social context and what is held to be an "acceptable" standard of living (Plan in Action, 2003). Traditionally, poverty was defined in terms of consumption or income (e.g., existing on US\$ 1 per day) (UNDP, 2003). More recently, the concept of human poverty has been introduced considering "general deprivations such as powerlessness and lack of capabilities. The concept also includes lack of political freedom, inability to participate in decision-making, lack of personal security and the inability to participate in the life of a community, and threats to sustainability and intergenerational equity." (UNDP, 1997).

facilitate this. The current challenge for the development community is therefore to integrate the perspectives and values of poor people into policy processes and project formulation and implementation (Robb, 2000).

It is well known that policy change has within itself the power to affect myriad factors (DFID, 2001) of concern to rural poor people, including:

- Access to assets and resources such as land, water and labor
- An environment that encourages investment
- The actual extent or amount of empowerment poor people gain in the decision-making process, and
- The rights of an individual, community and society as a whole (DFID, 2001).

Although the importance of policy and institutional issues in development is widely recognized, reform approaches are poorly understood (DFID, 2001), with aspects of tokenism being recognized in many projects and some major projects being accused of leaving poor people's voices unheeded.

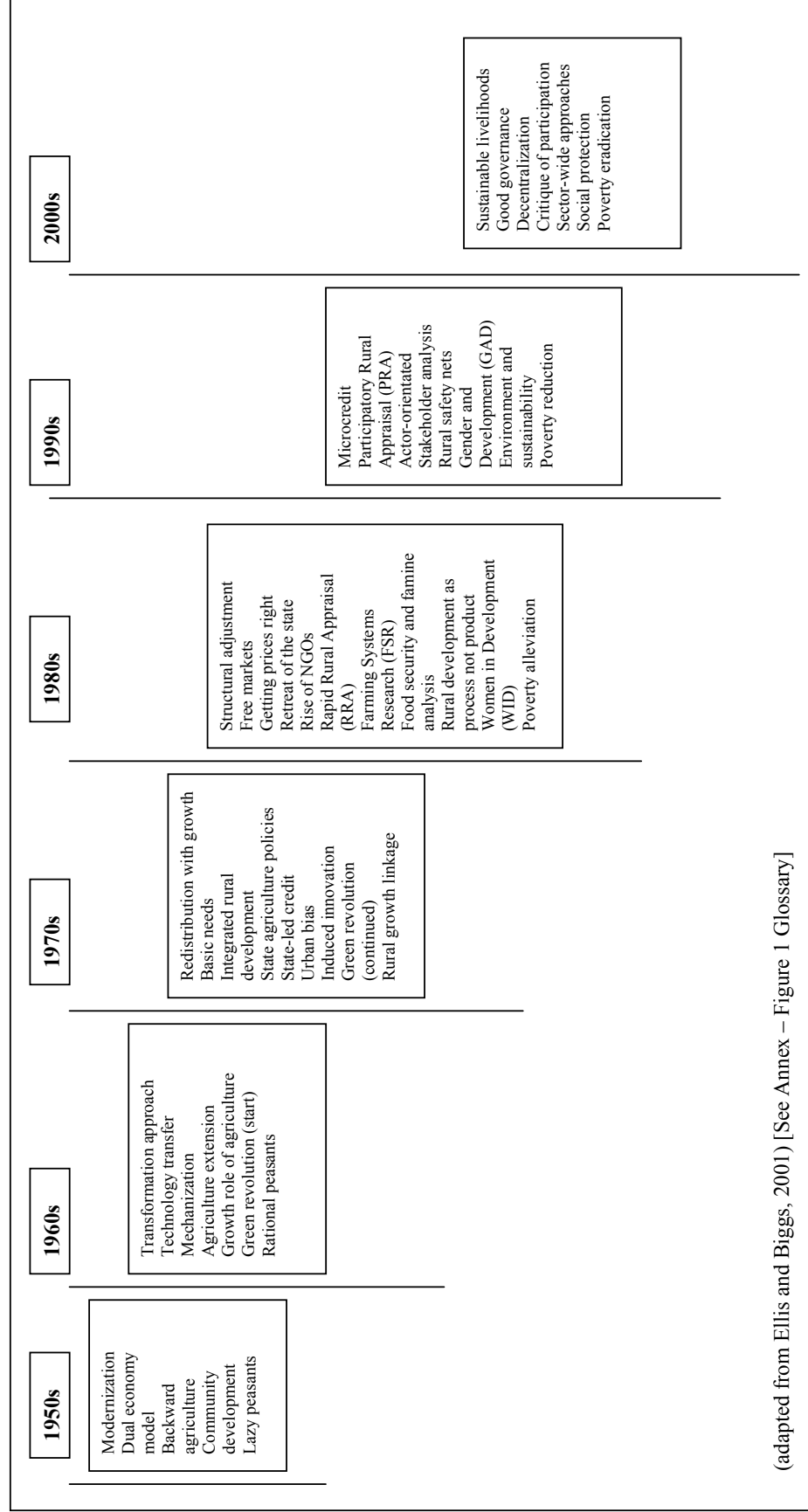
One current example is "Vision 2020". This project concerns the mechanization of farms, introduction of genetically-modified crops and the extension of irrigation, roads and electricity to rural communities of Andhra Pradesh in India. As it is based around the concept of "land consolidation", it intends to turn millions of small farms into larger production units. Opponents fear this will result in the loss of land for poor farmers, uncertainty in the provision of alternative livelihoods, and thus, massive rural to urban migration (BBC News, 2002; Guardian, 2001a,b,c, 2002; New Scientist, 2002).

In the case of India, and specifically with respect to the DFID NRSP Research Project R8100 "Investigating Improved Policy on Aquaculture Service Provision to Poor People", it is beneficial to draw on lessons learnt from previous projects and approaches in this young but expanding field of development thinking, and also to outline positive characteristics and potential constraints in this process. Despite the criticism of a poor understanding of approaches to policy reform, many projects have at least attempted to do just this. Some of their findings and lessons learnt are reviewed here, in addition to some approaches of particular relevance to India. Also included are reviews of the policy change process itself from DFID and the World Bank.

For coherence and clarity, this document includes topics that are presently thought essential to enable rural poor people to influence policy change. These are covered under sections on services and support, participation, livelihoods, other sectors and India.

This review also draws on lessons learnt from the R8100 project's six case studies and feedback from participants in the Stakeholders Workshop held in Ranchi, Jharkhand, from 29-30 January 2003. These groups included fishers and farmers, NGOs and government representatives, whose invaluable comments appear as footnotes which reinforce points in the text.

Figure 1 Rural Development Themes Timeline



(adapted from Ellis and Biggs, 2001) [See Annex – Figure 1 Glossary]

## Services and Support

It has been stated previously that, to raise their voices, rural poor people need to have support from service providers and other institutions. Through an examination of case studies from around the world, Goetz and Gaventa (2001) outlined major types of available services and support. Table 1 illustrates approaches that could be considered in the context of many groups, although the information in the table originally referred to “citizens” rather than rural poor people specifically. Participants in the Ranchi Stakeholders Workshop expanded upon and reinforced these services and support, adding specific comments on their validity in this context (see footnotes in Table 1). Important points raised included considerations that may have otherwise been overlooked in a literature review, comments concerning language and information media for awareness-building, and appreciation of the value of consultation and what can be achieved.

## Lessons Learnt

When examining the effectiveness of approaches, Goetz and Gaventa (2001) reviewed case studies presented by the Institute of Development Studies, deciding whether the initiative succeeded in achieving its objectives and whether it concerned citizens’ efforts to provoke the appropriate delivery of service. From this review, findings were produced and lessons drawn for future initiatives (Table 2). These include the strength of the “client lobby” in civil society, meaning that the strength of the voices of poor people is dependent on how much power or influence they have or are given; the political framework; and the nature of the state, accessibility of civil servants and accountability of institutions. These findings were also presented to participants in the Ranchi Stakeholders Workshop. Many of the points were echoed by participants. They included consideration of local languages and the formation of community Self-Help Groups (SHG), as were instigated by the DFID NRSP Projects R7830 (Integrated Management of Land and Water Resources for Enhancing Productivity in Bihar and Eastern Uttar Pradesh), and R7839 (Livelihoods Improved through Improved Crop and Soil Management) which will be discussed later.

In summarizing, Goetz and Gaventa (2001) state that the following conditions need to be met to at least some extent in any state, for citizens (or poor people) or joint initiatives to improve the responsiveness of service providers to society. These are:

- Legal standing or formal recognition of non-governmental observers within the area of policy-making and decisions, or in the institutions which assess quality in service delivery
- A continuous presence of these observers throughout the agency’s work
- Organized access to the flow of official documents<sup>2</sup>
- The right of observers to write and send dissenting reports to legislative bodies, and
- The right of service users to formal investigation and legal redress for poor or non-delivery of services.

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<sup>2</sup> In all government schemes, local languages should be used (Jankars, fishers and farmers from Jharkhand); Recommendations for policies should be made in all languages for distribution to villagers as part of the consultation process for policy change (Jankars, fishers and farmers from West Bengal)

Few approaches were seen to incorporate all of the above. However, the extent to which they did helped determine their success in producing more appropriate and better-delivered services.

*Table 1 Type of Service or Support Likely to Increase the Amount of Voice Citizens Have in Policy-making*

<b>Service or Support</b>	<b>Explanation</b>
Awareness raising and building capacity to mobilize	To raise their voices, rural poor people need to be aware of issues that affect or may affect them and be able to express that voice <sup>2,3</sup>
Lobbying to influence planning and policy formulation	Individuals, NGOs or communities contacting policy planners and decision-makers directly <sup>4</sup>
Citizen-based monitoring and evaluation	Holding policy-makers accountable <sup>5</sup>
Implementation and precedent setting (including partnerships)	For when no answer is heard from service providers, as no alternative providers exist; citizens can run services themselves through NGOs
Citizen auditing	Citizen audits of spending; can include social audits where citizens evaluate if money has been well spent <sup>5</sup>
Joint management of sectoral programs	In principle, directly responsive service delivery used traditionally where social groups are distant or have rejected the authority of the state
Government frameworks for participatory planning and community development	Participatory planning mechanisms have been institutionalized through legislative reforms; participatory planning requirements are increasingly included in decentralization of local governance
Consultation	This offers a way of gauging public opinion <sup>3,7,8,9</sup>
Setting standards	Can act as a benchmark against which the public can measure standards of service
Incentives, sanctions, performance measurements	For policy-makers to be focused on rural poor people
Service delivery ethos in organizational culture	Includes training for more a poor-focused attitude and behavior in service providers
Accessible government	Making the government more accessible and transparent in dealings with the public, including the creation of points of access
New rights for citizens or poor people	Reforms that intend to empower citizens in relation to the state, or the creation of public institutions for the protection of rights

(Summarized from Goetz and Gaventa, 2001)

<sup>2</sup> In all government schemes, local languages should be used (Jankars, fishers and farmers from Jharkhand); Recommendations for policies should be made in all languages for distribution to villagers as part of the consultation process for policy change (Jankars, fishers and farmers from West Bengal)

<sup>3</sup> The government should visit villages for consultation to inform of policies (Jankars, fishers and farmers from Jharkhand)

<sup>4</sup> Flexible policies should be made according to local needs (Jankars, fishers and farmers from Jharkhand)

<sup>5</sup> Implementation and evaluation should be by villagers (who will be in a position to become involved) (Jankars, fishers and farmers from Jharkhand)

<sup>6</sup> If consultation is enhanced, people will be able to form a dream, which could give rise to the development of new government schemes (Government and NGOs from Jharkhand)

<sup>7</sup> Where there are community groups without capacity to consult with government on their own terms, then other people are needed to assist (Government and NGOs from Jharkhand)

<sup>8</sup> People of one village think only about their village, so schemes for 100 or 1,000 villages need more than one consultation in one village (GVT and University from Jharkhand)

<sup>9</sup> People from government and banks could be invited to visit villages to improve understanding and communication (GVT from West Bengal)

*Table 2 Key Findings and Lessons Learnt to Enable Poor People to Have a Voice in Service Delivery*

Key Findings	Lessons Learnt
Strength of the “client lobby” in civil society (traditionally excluded groups can have a voice)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Groups need a broad membership, one which cuts across divisions such as class and religion, removing the accusation that it may be pandering to narrow special interest groups<sup>10,11</sup></li> <li>▪ Clear incentives are offered to cause citizens to participate and cooperate (anticipated improved service delivery)</li> <li>▪ Use of media or public forums (internet, public hearings, shame and praise of service providers)<sup>2</sup></li> <li>▪ Protest (or the threat of protest) but constructive engagement</li> <li>▪ Engage (successfully) with challenging policy-makers’ assumptions (cognitive framing), using official terminology and reformatted to fit with government objectives or priority areas<sup>12</sup></li> <li>▪ Coordination, support from other groups, enabling citizens to feel vindicated for raising issues<sup>13,14</sup></li> </ul>
The political framework	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Poor people best able to influence policy in contexts where there are numerous, ideologically diversified and institutionalized parties</li> <li>▪ Political competition seeks alliances with social groups</li> <li>▪ Opportunities may come from system or governance change</li> <li>▪ More research is needed on political environment and effectiveness of voice</li> </ul>
The nature of the state, accessibility of civil servants and accountability of institutions	<p>State capacity is the bottom line in determining attentiveness to citizens’ voices and client focus in service delivery. Detailed below are citizens’ efforts, which can make reasonably competent states more responsive to the voices of poor people.</p> <p>The effectiveness of consultative approaches is enhanced when:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Citizens can obtain technical knowledge about the service, evaluate its quality and suggest alternatives.</li> <li>▪ State actors coordinate consultation with decision-making processes and commitments to take action.</li> <li>▪ Working practices and conditions of frontline workers encourage access and communication with citizens and rural poor people.<sup>15</sup></li> <li>▪ The state invests time and money in outreach and extension work already.</li> </ul> <p>The representation of client concerns is enhanced in policy-making where:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Citizens are in alliance with reform-minded civil servants and “insiders”.</li> </ul> <p>Influence resulting in changes in policy or improved accountability to clients is the result of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Incentives for workers in the public sector to engage in participatory processes and to gain results</li> <li>▪ External monitoring systems and potential embarrassment of poor performance</li> <li>▪ Income linked to effectiveness in delivery</li> <li>▪ Citizens provided with rights so they can take legal recourse if service not provided (e.g., right to education).</li> </ul>

(Summarized from Goetz and Gaventa, 2001)

<sup>10</sup> If the beneficiary stakeholder groups are excluded, then appropriate policies will not be possible for people. If there is consultation, then people can think and propose big (they will be empowered). (GVT and University from Jharkhand)

<sup>11</sup> Women should have reservations for their involvement (Jankars, fishers and farmers from West Bengal)

<sup>2</sup> In all government schemes, local languages should be utilized (Jankars, fishers and farmers from Jharkhand); Recommendations for policies should be made in all languages for distribution to villagers as part of the consultation process for policy change (Jankars, fishers and farmers from West Bengal)

<sup>12</sup> One study needs to be on project areas of GVT to better understand “technical words” (like participation, trust and decentralization) (GVT from Orissa)

<sup>13</sup> Through formation of strong SHGs people in villages can articulate their thinking to authorities, e.g., problems in service provision, injustice, government agencies and banks (GVT from West Bengal)

<sup>14</sup> Lending from banks and loan recovery would be improved by lending to groups, not individuals (GVT from West Bengal)

<sup>15</sup> GVT (and such organizations) should work in more areas of Orissa so they can get support. If government and people can work together, they can do it in a better way

## Decentralization and Devolution

The terms “decentralization” and “devolution” are used with increasing frequency with respect to policies and practices, and should therefore be defined for clarity: “decentralization” is perhaps best described as the relocation of administrative functions away from a central location, and “devolution” as the relocation of power and capacity or authority from a central location to contribute to decision-making, a key to sustainability (Dember and Perlis, 1999). As the two terms are frequently mixed together under the banner of “decentralization”, it is easy to assume that the two terms are permanently linked, with one occurring *de facto* with the other. This is however not the case, as administrative functions may be decentralized but power may not (Dember and Perlis, 1999). Meaningful devolution relocates not only administrative functions, but also the power to make decisions and set objectives (Fisher, 1999). As we are concerned with policy change, devolution is our goal and decentralization is one of the mechanisms which may achieve it<sup>16</sup>. But this is by no means certain and we should not become victims of thinking in terms of token decentralization. However, currently with respect to developmental thinking (see Figure 1), decentralization is increasingly being seen as a non-negotiable alternative to central control and processes (Onibon et al., 1999).

Examining forestry projects aimed at increasing community resources management, Fisher (1999) states that meaningful devolution needs both:

1. Local level managers (from local governments or local communities) who have the means or capacity to manage, and
2. Those presently with the power over decisions who are ready to transfer their authority.

However, this second group may fear losing power, or more uncommonly, as a result of uninformed mismanagement, a level of trust in local management has to be built. Trust is a prominent issue and key to poor people gaining a voice in policy-making. This is particularly true if it is considered that in all but the smallest communities, it is not possible for all voices to be heard. Therefore, decision-making requires that all are represented in an appropriate manner, without which elite groups may dominate and minorities ignored or oppressed (Ribot, 1999). Monitoring mechanisms are also therefore required.

The formulation of poverty reduction strategies was previously undertaken at national levels. However, now with decentralization and the corresponding increasing role and autonomy of regional and local governments in implementing national policies, it is more locally focused. It is thus crucial that participation in policy change also be decentralized to involve local government in processes of policy and strategy formulation (Tikare et al., 2000).

The importance of local government has increased with the process of decentralization, with local level implementation of poverty reduction strategies. This is not to totally exclude higher levels. Indeed, if higher levels of government consult with local levels and offer feedback, local offices become motivated, trust is built and local levels will be more likely to continue to consult, inform and adapt to their local conditions. Local politicians and leaders often have considerable expertise in working with civil society. This know-how can be

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<sup>16</sup> There need to be legal powers that can take advantage of decentralization, i.e., transfer power to local bodies, for example, Gram Panchayats to recommend to DFOs who should be given leases.

tapped to the advantage of poverty alleviation, identifying possible participants in a process supplemented by the inclusion of community leaders.

To be sustainable, representation must be institutionalized. Local government is key as it can be made downwardly accountable and is also a permanent institution (Ribot, 1999). Empowering local NGOs and village chiefs can take legitimacy from these groups – where locally accountable government does not exist, sustainable participation is difficult. Downward accountability of local government may have to be a prerequisite. Accountable representation without power is empty, and devolution of power without accountability can be dangerous (Ribot, 1999). Locally accountable representatives with power demonstrate to people that government values participation and devolution and adds to the level of trust while facilitating exchange (Ribot, 1999).

### **Constraints on Decentralization and Devolution**

There are of course constraints to the processes of decentralization and devolution of power, including:

- Neo-traditional elites, those with greater strength or access to resources, may exploit it to reinforce their own power – innovative approaches are required to integrate locally accountable individuals and institutions into the process in the correct way.
- Will decentralized institutions be more effective than the state, due to limited resources?
- Is the state merely passing a task with which they have difficulty to local institutions? But these may be more suited to deal with it because of their position.

### **Participation**

Participation in the formulation and implementation of poverty reduction strategies leads to more effective, better-developed policies, and thus to a reduction in poverty. It also facilitates the building of partnerships based on trust and consensus between government and society, including rural poor people. Trust facilitates dialogue and cooperation towards a common goal.

In the past, an important reason for the potential benefits of policies and programs not reaching poor people has been ascribed to the lack of participation of these very groups in planning and implementation (e.g., Kumaran, 2001). Policy change or reform cannot be achieved without a deeper consideration of the use of the term “participation”. Simply put, participation is “a process through which stakeholders influence and share control over development initiatives, decisions and utilization of the resources that affect them” (Tikare et al., 2000).

No standard blueprint or template exists. Rather the process involves a diverse array of approaches which incorporate information, dissemination, collaboration, coordination and consultation and range from political representation to participatory research (Tikare et al., 2000). The fact that no “standard” exists is extremely important and should be remembered whenever approaching the issue of participation. Hence, “participation” will differ in



different countries and contexts, though it should be remembered that at their heart, all participatory approaches seek to empower the intended “beneficiaries”. They also intend to allay feelings of rural poor people that they are simply receivers of decisions taken by others, out of their control – the so-called “Dependency Syndrome” (Kumaran, 2001). Participatory approaches can also build the trust<sup>12</sup> that has been described as lacking in the development environment. As a case in point, Box 1 presents statements of what our project participants – Jankars, fishers and farmers – think of when the word “participation” is mentioned, and their experience of it.

*Box 1 Jankar, Fisher and Farmer Views of “Participation” and Their Experience of It*

*Rich people are currently dominating the poor whose voice is excluded from decision making. The poor are therefore not allowed to say anything that is against rich people's interests. Additionally the poor don't have time to challenge the rich as they are too busy conducting their livelihoods. However, they have problems which need addressing, such as the cost of feed and the bomb blasting of ponds by antisocial elements. What is needed is a united front based on understanding between group members and a good relationship with government. (from Jharkhand villagers)*

*Everyone participates together to form a group. Group actions can help take care of individuals whose work and livelihood would suffer due to their absence (for example through illness). (from Orissa villagers)*

*A group works in cohesion for the management of resources and improved security and marketing advantages. Also presenting themselves as a group when applying for government loans is more advantageous than individual applications. However, government contact with villagers is diminishing. (from West Bengal villagers)*

From this simple elicitation of views alone, it is immediately obvious that the word “participation” reveals “real life” rather than academic images and concepts of inclusiveness, greater strength, validation and mutual support through consideration of the views of multiple stakeholders and the power of increased numbers.

Inclusive methods and a consideration of an array of stakeholders are therefore mechanisms towards empowerment. Trade-offs with other development priorities are also identified more readily as are the most effective delivery mechanisms and partnerships. Finally, transparency and accountability in decision-making, actions and finance are created, increasing chances of long-term sustainability (Tikare et al., 2000).

A common thread running through “participation” is that it needs to build on existing political and governance structures, such as parliaments, to strengthen the representation of poor people in existing processes (Tikare et al., 2000). This is often seen as preferable to trying to instigate new structures that are destined to fail (DFID, 2001).

Originally, practices such as Participatory Poverty Assessments (PPA) used to rely on data from quantitative household surveys and based poverty definitions on consumption, income and health. Poor people were treated as objects of inquiry. PPA now aims to give poor people a voice and some control over the research process.

<sup>12</sup> A study is needed in project areas of GVT to better understand technical words like participation, trust decentralization (GVT from Orissa)

In the past, PPA assisted in uncovering poor peoples' concerns and had the potential to help them move from a state of passive dependency to an active state where they were involved in seeking ways to reduce their poverty by being involved in policy formulation and delivery. Participatory Poverty Assessment:

- Gives poor people a voice, and allows for better technical diagnosis of problems and improved design and implementation of solutions
- Has the potential to increase dialogue and negotiation at a policy level and strengthen links between communities and policy-makers
- Provides a fuller analysis when used in conjunction with traditional household surveys
- Can increase the commitment to deliver policy among groups in civil society, and
- Could challenge existing power relations in the long term.

Recommendations include:

- Good PPA practice should include wide ownership of the process, a good team approach, commitment to poverty reduction and strong management support.
- The potential impact of PPA on policy depends on the commitment and support of government and in-country stakeholders.
- At a community level, PPA quality, credibility and effectiveness are affected by research methods, time allocated for fieldwork, researcher skill and the degree of linkage between institutions.

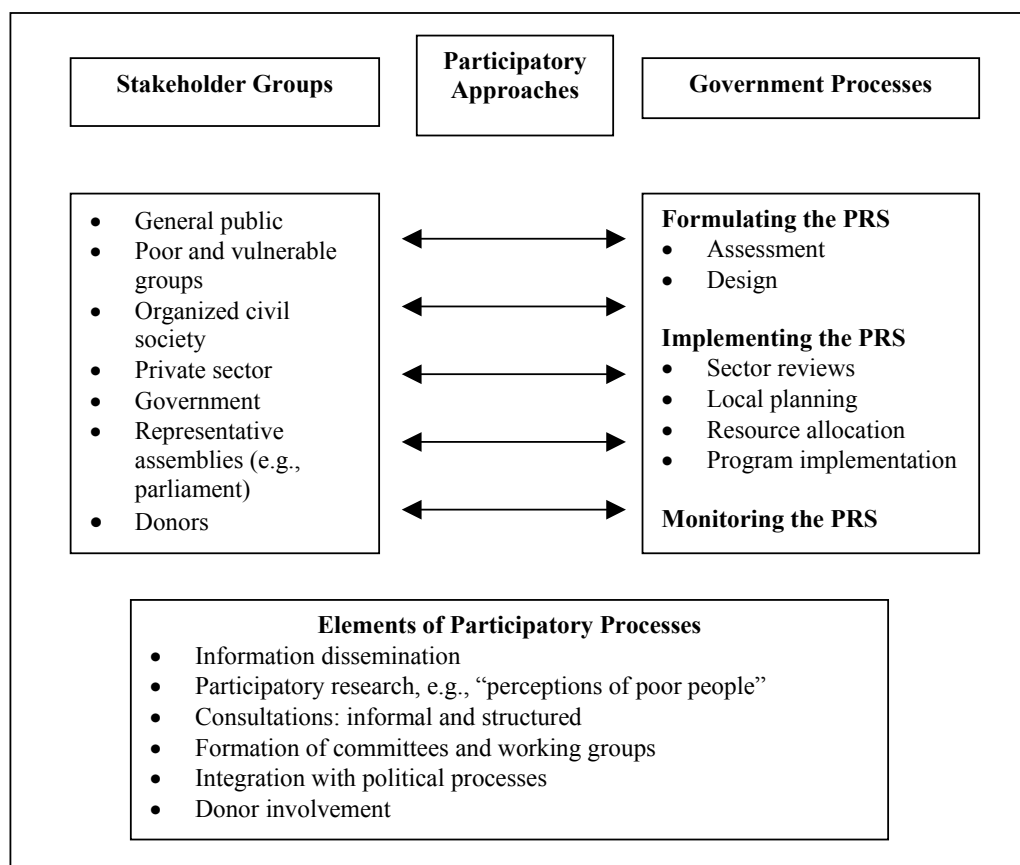
Further to this, and considering macro-level policy change and policy for poverty reduction, participation frameworks must involve three elements: stakeholder groups, government processes, and participatory approaches (Figure 2). Of course, as mentioned previously, there can be no blueprint for "participation", which will be context- and country-specific.

## **Lessons Learnt**

### *Constraints on Participation*

However, Box 2 shows that there are many potential constraints that can arise, and in practice, implementing "participation" is not simple. The effectiveness and chance of continued sustainability is increased with a consideration of constraints such as those in Box 2. One of these is yet again "tokenism" or "lip service" towards participatory approaches (Enters and Anderson, 1999; Tikare et al., 2000), although, along with decentralization, participation is thought to include a more representative portion of a group in decision-making processes (Ribot, 1999).

*Figure 2 Framework for Participation*



(adapted from Tikare et al., 2000; Note: PRS = Poverty Reduction Strategy)

*Box 2 Constraints on Participation*

- The creation of “parallel participatory processes” – those that are not integrated within already existing social, political and institutional structures – is usually ill-advised.
- Limited trust, conflicts of interest and uneven bargaining power between stakeholders can give rise to disorganization and worse, the abuse of confidences.
- Differing perceptions of the participation process by stakeholders and the corresponding potential for misunderstanding and exaggerated expectations.
- Insufficient sharing of knowledge.
- Poorly planned participation processes, token effort or “lip service” to participation.
- Lack of political will among government and policy planners, as they fear loss of power or personal influence.
- Limited resources such as financial and crucially, time and capacity.
- Consultation fatigue within any stakeholder group.
- Raising expectations unfairly; mechanisms should be built in to manage raised expectations.
- The identification of priorities agencies cannot respond to.
- Risk of being overtaken by powerful local interests.
- Failure to incorporate community structures (e.g., wealth, social status, gender).

(adapted from RIA No. 1, 2000; STREAM, 2002; Tikare et al., 2000)

*Consultation and the Empowerment Approach*

When referring to the service provided by the police in the United Kingdom, Cook (2002) outlined the new thinking with respect to end-user engagement, participation and policy discussion or consultation. The process initiates with consultation<sup>3,7, 8,9</sup> (a process considered vital by project stakeholders for feedback regarding existing services and support), moves through participation (to develop these services and support), through to eventual empowerment (enabling end-users to manage the services and support). From here on, the processes are intended to reinforce each other (Cook, 2002) (see Figure 3). The process relies on consultation and the lesson learnt was that consultation is a process rather than a one-off event. It has to be acknowledged that a service needs to be negotiated, sustainable and managed. Productive consultation means developing a proactive model with end-users which moves away from so-called “tick-box tokenism” of previous initiatives, to genuine user engagement in policy decisions and potentially empowerment (Cook, 2002) (again in Figure 3). There is acknowledgement that consultation is a vital but complicated and problematic process (Cook, 2002). However, with time, progressive views can gradually replace or supplement the “old ways” (Table 3).

*Table 3 Old and New Ways of Addressing End-user Engagement*

	<b>Old Ways</b>	<b>New Ways</b>
Working with end-users	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Formal consultation on plans</li> <li>▪ Nominal representation on planning groups</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ User-led services</li> <li>▪ Direct payments</li> <li>▪ Involvement in best value</li> <li>▪ Involvement in commissioning decisions</li> </ul>

(adapted from Cook, 2002)

Nominal representation still dominates many consultation processes (Cook, 2002), although other approaches – such as the sharing of information and signing of documents by all parties – demonstrate a “commitment to involving users in decisions about their lives”. The empowerment approach has the fundamental aim of ensuring that users not only have more say but more power in policy-making processes.

It should also be remembered that not all services are suitable for direct engagement and participation by citizens or poor people, with such concerns as efficiency, privacy and confidentiality. Also people’s participation is not always wanted by these groups, who are limited by time, interest, work and social commitments. It must not be assumed that citizens value direct participation over improved responsibility and services by providers. They may be happy to leave this to trustees or representatives (Goetz and Gaventa, 2001).

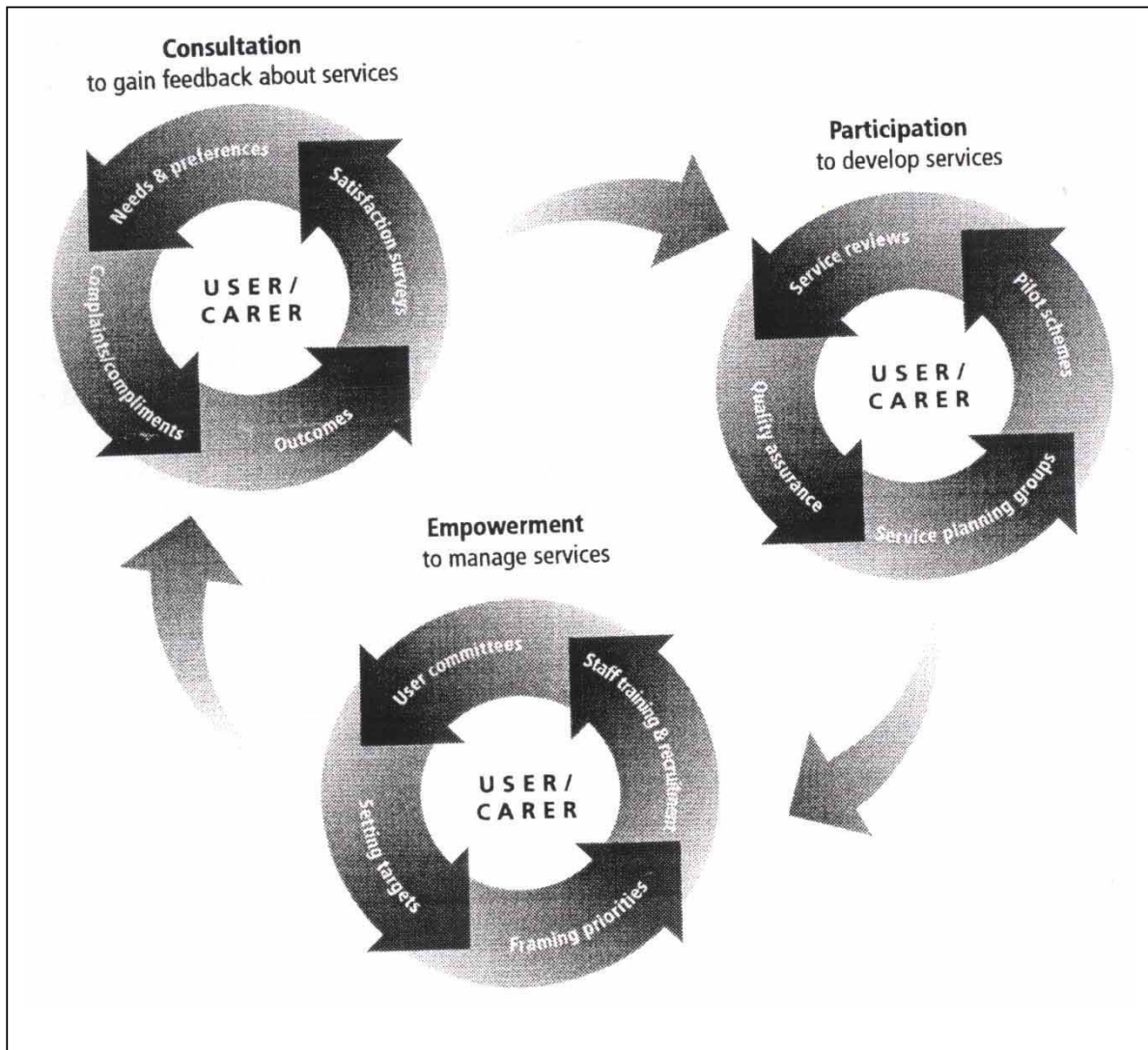
<sup>3</sup> The government should visit villages for consultation to inform policies (Jankars, fishers and farmers from Jharkhand)

<sup>7</sup> Where there are community groups without the capacity to consult with government on their own terms, then other people may be needed to assist (Government and NGOs from Jharkhand)

<sup>8</sup> People of one village may think only about their village, so schemes for 100 or 1,000 villages need more than one consultation in one village (GVT and University from Jharkhand)

<sup>9</sup> People from government and banks could be invited to visit villages to improve understanding and communication (GVT from West Bengal)

Figure 3 From Consultation to Empowerment



(adapted from Cook, 2002)

### *Instigators of Change*

Any process of social transformation needs actors who innovate and lead the way forward. The Society for International Development (SID) acts on the principle that, as an international network of individuals, local and national NGOs and research institutions, it serves as a catalyst of civil society, meaning that it has within its power to facilitate encounters and the establishment of relationships between social and political activists in various political entities. Through its programs, SID aims to provide a shared understanding of how actions in different localities and political spaces can complement each other and converge into a broad process of social transformation (Amalric, 2001). The World Food Program, an inter-governmental organization, also embraces this principle. SID works along the principle that “men and women are the engine of social change”, that “people are the subjects and not objects of development”.

These examples come from the DFID NRSP projects R7830 and R7839 mentioned previously. One of the lessons learnt in enabling poor people to have a voice in service provision – from these other two projects and this project’s participants – was the formation of community structures such as Self-Help Groups (SHGs) (see Table 2). These projects addressed this very issue, testing improved and efficient ways of SHG promotion in Bihar and eastern Uttar Pradesh in India. They utilized savings and credit schemes to tackle rural poverty in areas characterized by extreme poverty and poor governance, infrastructure and institutional arrangements, especially with respect to markets. Hence, robust grassroots organizations capable of interacting with other institutions, such as the scientific community, banks, local markets and government agencies, were required. Managed by a team of external professionals (Cirrus Management Services Pvt Ltd), this was achieved by utilizing simple awareness creation and capacity-building techniques via local volunteers.

Two tools were devised, the first a dynamic and evolving list of frequently-asked questions, and the second a “group development template”. These were used to train local volunteers, create awareness and build the capacity of SHGs. Through a combination of active engagement followed by a period of disengagement, using SHGs as building blocks from which to develop “higher level networks” or “village core teams”, the following was achieved:

- People in villages were brought together and provided with a forum to analyze and discuss issues.
- External agencies were engaged with (and challenged where appropriate), particularly scientists, markets, banks and government.
- Information was accumulated and disseminated to facilitate new linkages, networks and partnerships.
- New SHGs were promoted in and beyond the village and supported.
- The roles provided by the external support were taken over, making their role redundant within nine months of their entry in the village (disengagement).

Cirrus has since withdrawn from 15 villages and has found that, far from declining, the performance of SHGs and village core teams has continued to increase (Ashok, 2003). This is just one demonstration of how poor people – through creation of grassroots organizations, participation, collaboration and feedback – can participate in the mainstream economy by building their own networks to interact with other groups such as local government.

### *Grassroots Organizations*

However, there are many problems in organizing poor people, as they are seldom organized on their own to fight poverty. Political parties such as “communists” initially organized groups of agriculture workers, but only a small percentage was affected. As mentioned, factors include lack of interest, the tendency for administrative<sup>19</sup> and legal ways of working to maintain the “status quo” (i.e., nothing changes), the dependence of poor people on landowners and the history of social oppression by upper classes and dominant castes (Kumaran, 2001).

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<sup>19</sup> Jankars have reported, and the GVT approach of community organizers in clusters of villages have highlighted, a need for an administrative level between block and village level so that remote villages can be appropriately serviced (GVT from West Bengal)

Local government agencies and NGOs are vital at the field level, and are predominantly concerned with facilitation and support (Fisher, 1995). Looking at forestry departments, Fisher (1995) noted that, to develop a collaborative approach to forest management projects, they should adjust their role from one of policing local people to these institutional change roles:

- Enabling staff and institutions to carry out their roles more effectively
- Moving towards flexibility rather than control
- Changing staff training away from enforcement techniques towards a more considered learning technique – this applies to superiors too, as staff cannot be expected to treat villagers in a collaborative manner if they themselves are treated in an authoritarian manner, and
- Conducting training that is experimental and includes critical reflection.

Such a learning approach will enable NGOs and government agencies to have better access to rural poor people, be better able to organize at this level and make the process of projects becoming user-led that much easier.

#### *User-led*

It is generally agreed under the ideas of “participatory” approaches that ways of working can be user-led and that academic and government professionals are perhaps not best suited to guide policy, with the real “experts” being poor people themselves. Examples from health studies in countries such as the USA and UK have revealed key lessons such as that “experts needed to take into account the views of the community when making decisions about health care provisions” (Cook, 2002). This is an approach that can be applied across the board to any service provision in the developed or developing world.

Another example is PATH’s “People Assessing Their Own Health”. Here, participatory processes could make people “shift their thinking beyond the illness problem of individuals to how programs and policies could support or conversely weaken public health policy” (Cook, 2002). In the UK in 2000, the National Health Service issued 12 million leaflets asking, “What are the top three things you think would make the NHS better for you and your family?”

It is also important to identify openings for policy change. Influencing policy change means taking steps towards “sitting at the table” where decisions are being made, where evidence of impact is required at the micro-level rather than through theoretical speculation (CIDA, 1998).

Additionally, it is vital that people’s organizations can stand on their own. However, it should also be acknowledged that sometimes middle-class activists can open doors and get governments to listen to poor people. It should be recognized that no group or individual should be excluded from the process as a result of dogmatic thinking or the following of a particular development approach or standard. In the case of the middle classes, for instance, these groups can bring evidence of impact at household and community levels, which may be overlooked if they are shut out or excluded from the process (CIDA, 1998).

## Livelihoods

### **Livelihoods Analysis**

Another demonstration of the importance of participatory approaches in enabling rural poor people to influence policy change is examination of poor people's livelihoods strategies, or "livelihoods analysis" (LHA). Livelihoods analysis is essential in the formulation of pro-poor policy and reforms. Crucially, LHA can help identify appropriate "points of contact" between policies and the livelihoods strategies of poor people, effectively identifying appropriate entry points or areas of focus for policy change. Additionally LHA addresses questions such as these, which are crucial to such a process (DFID, 2001):

- Who are poor people and where are they?
- In terms of their livelihoods, what are their priorities, their most important assets and their livelihoods strategies?
- Which policies and institutions are relevant to these priorities?
- In what capacities are these policies and institutions helping or constraining poor people?
- What policy and institutional environment would be of most benefit to assist people in achieving improved sustainable livelihoods?
- Are there key constraints that need to be addressed, reduced and mitigated?
- What approaches and procedures are most appropriate to achieve reform to benefit poor people?

The tools used in addressing these questions are participatory and follow the principles outlined in the previous section. They can be viewed as mechanisms to help achieve sustained empowerment, culminating in policy change. DFID have produced a sustainable livelihoods framework, but like all participatory approaches, this needs to be considered in the context and environment where it is being used (STREAM, 2002). Such participatory tools may include:

- Social Map
- Transect Walk
- Historical Timeline
- Seasonal Calendar
- Trendline
- Wealth Ranking
- Mobility Map
- Venn Diagram
- Strength Analysis
- Problem Ranking and Analysis
- Action Plan

### **Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper**

On a larger scale, the question of how poor people and civil society organizations can affect policy that will reduce poverty was addressed at a recent conference hosted by the World Bank and World Vision International (DevNews Media Center, 2002). The main emphasis was on the use of Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSP). In March 2002, the boards of the World Bank and International Monetary Fund endorsed the findings of the PRSP



approach with 70 low-income country governments. This reinforced the importance of nationally-owned poverty reduction strategies to advance towards the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) (World Bank and IMF, 2002).

A PRSP is described as a holistic development tool, particularly useful in addressing non-economic issues such as human rights and the rule of law in the protection of poor people (DevNews Media Center, 2002). PRSPs aim for national policies and programs, as well as aid and debt relief, to be used to reduce poverty. They have been found to have particular benefits and also highlight remaining challenges (Box 3).

PRSPs, like livelihoods analysis, are the product of participatory processes (World Bank and IMF, 2002) and attempt to bring the views of a range of stakeholders into the design of national poverty reduction strategies, where information is disseminated and local languages are used. To some extent, PRSPs are said to institutionalize stakeholder participation (World Bank and IMF, 2002). Examples include Albania, where civil society groups were invited to express their views on the PRSP by joining working groups (World Bank and IMF, 2002).

*Box 3 Benefits and Challenges of Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSP)*

Key benefits:

- A growing sense of ownership among most governments of their poverty reduction strategies.
- A more open dialogue within governments, and with at least some parts of civil society, than had previously existed.
- A more prominent place for poverty reduction in policy debates, extending beyond social sector interventions to focus on reducing income poverty through higher and broadly shared growth.
- More systematic data collection, analysis and monitoring of outcomes.

Key challenges:

- Alignment by partners, including the Bank and Fund, to support PRSP implementation.
- Shifting beyond process, to content and implementation, and greater understanding of the linkages between policies and poverty outcomes.
- Realism in the setting of goals and targets, as well as managing expectations, both within countries and among their development partners. This is important in considering a key constraint on participation, that of raising expectations unfairly.

(adapted from World Bank and IMF, 2002)

## Other Sectors

Table 4 (at the end of the document) presents a selection of points raised from reviewing participatory approaches and lessons learnt from a variety of fields such as health, education and agriculture in South and Southeast Asia. These programs used a variety of participatory approaches to address various goals, many concerned directly with poor people's voices in policy change.

Linkages and cooperation<sup>20</sup> were key issues for success; this itself was achieved through raised awareness. In addition, linkages are required to build trust and make participatory approaches easier to implement and maintain. Constraints on the process included the conclusion that people have other more pressing and important priorities than that of participating in agencies' projects, and also financial constraints on the project itself, sometimes leading to inadequate supply to meet demand. However, some projects reported that, even with a small budget, progress can be achieved. Policy change cannot be realized overnight and it may be that results will be achieved after the lifetime of the project. Indeed, if empowerment and sustainable development are to be achieved, this may be the case. Small steps in the right direction may be made even with small amounts of financing.

## India

The government of India and its state governments have been implementing programs intended to eradicate poverty. The objectives of these programs have been seen as commendable, but were based on a belief in spending money to alleviate poverty and without realizing how important non-monetary policies are (Saxena, 2002). Reforms for poor people have been adverse due to the socio-economic position of this group. Spending money on development schemes (such as shrimp farming) has occurred without assisting poor people's bargaining power and has only served to degrade their situation. Government intervention should not only improve the incomes of poor people but also aim to improve their bargaining power (Saxena, 2002).

In India, participatory approaches to include those historically-excluded are known under the name of Deliberative and Inclusive Processes (DIP). They have been used to supplement conventional democratic processes and to move beyond traditional forms of consultation of the past twenty-five years (Pimbert and Wakeford, 2002a). Applied to an array of issues and contexts, they therefore differ substantially, but they all generally incorporate basic features as described in Box 4.

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<sup>20</sup> Better schemes will come from improved links among villages, block and district levels. District collectors should process applications for loans in a transparent way (GVT and University from Jharkhand)

*Box 4 Some Basic Features of Deliberative and Inclusive Processes (DIP)*

- Deliberation is defined as “careful consideration” or the “discussion of reasons for and against”.
- Deliberation is a common, if not inherent, component of all decision-making and of democratic societies.
- Inclusion is the action of involving others and an inclusive decision-making process is based on the active involvement of many social actors, and usually emphasizes the participation of previously excluded citizens.
- Social interaction is usually part of any DIP, and normally incorporates face-to-face meetings between those involved.
- There is a dependence on language through discussion and debate. This is usually in the form of verbal and visual constructions rather than written text.
- A deliberative process assumes that, at least initially, there are different positions held by participants and that these views should be respected.
- DIPs are designed to enable participants to evaluate and re-evaluate their positions in the light of different perspectives and new evidence.
- Negotiation is seen often to be more valuable than the decisions made as participants tackle an issue through public reasoning and dialogue.
- The goal is ultimately hard to reach but decisions, or at least positions on decisions, can be taken through an unhurried, reflective forum of open-ended discussion

(adapted from Pimbert and Wakeford, 2002a)

**Vision 2020 and the Prajateerpu Jury**

One development project currently appears to be dominating the field in India, at least with respect to media coverage and the depth of local feeling. The Vision 2020 project remains extremely controversial, with allegations that it will harm the very people it intends to help and has completely ignored consultations with them. The project will oust, it is said, over 20 million people from their traditional rural livelihoods (BBC News, 2002; Guardian, 2001a,b,c, 2002; New Scientist, 2002). This is despite Vision 2020 stating that it intends to:

... decentralize governance and ensure that people have a voice in local administration, become a SMART (Simple, Moral, Accountable, Responsive, Transparent) government by improving transparency and accountability and ensuring effective and responsive services and enhance its capabilities and encourage an ethos of public service to strengthen policy making and performance (Vision 2020).

It is for this reason that the Prajateerpu (people's verdict) approach was devised as a mechanism to allow citizens of Andhra Pradesh to shape a vision of their own with respect to Vision 2020 (India Together, 2002; Pimbert and Wakeford, 2002a,b). The Prajateerpu Jury was organized by the Andhra Pradesh Coalition in Defence of Diversity, Institute for Development Studies (UK), International Institute for Environment and Development (UK), National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (India) and the University of Hyderabad (India). It incorporated many DIPs in aiding the historically-excluded to gain a voice (Pimbert and Wakeford, 2002a,b).

Extensive discussions were held between partners at local, national and international levels, including community organizations, development NGOs, academics and policy-makers. They formulated an approach, which combined the use of a citizens jury, workshops and video to

outline different paths for food security over the next twenty years (India Together, 2002; Pimbert and Wakeford, 2002a,b).

The citizens jury was key (Box 5). Members were drawn from communities of small-scale and marginal farmers from all over the state, with women forming the majority. The jurors' discussions were informed by their questioning of key witnesses ranging from government officials, to agrochemical companies (e.g., SYNGENTA), universities, NGOs and government advisory groups.

*Box 5 Prajateerpu: The Citizens Jury Method*

In a citizens jury, a representative panel of citizens meets for a total of thirty to fifty hours to examine an issue of public significance. The jury, usually consisting of between twelve and twenty members, is representative of the public as a whole. They hear from an array of witnesses and then discuss and deliberate together on the issue at hand. On the final day of the hearings, the jury present their recommendations to the public and policy-makers.

This process has a number of features that distinguish it from other methods of participation:

- Participants are recruited rather than being asked to attend via an open invitation.
- Participants can analyze the information they are given by witnesses.
- Participants have time to reflect and deliberate over the information, questions and issues raised, usually assisted by a facilitator.
- Participants are expected to act as jurors and develop a set of conclusions or visions, and relay them to policy-makers.

To determine their suitability, potential jurors are asked about issues such as the size of their land, caste, crops grown, livestock and livelihood options, to ensure they are of the right group and also to check whether they do not feel inhibited about speaking in a formal setting. Researchers are careful not to pick community workers but get these workers to find jury members, a technique referred to as "snowballing".

(adapted from Pimbert and Wakeford, 2002b)

**Lessons Learnt from the Approach**

Jurors were often less constrained by the boundaries of their field as specialists could be and as a result, were sometimes more open-minded. However, there was obviously also a significant divergence of opinion, though there was agreement on the final statements which outlined the feelings and desires of rural poor people, clearly stated to all groups involved for their consideration.

It was found that the participatory approach of the Prajateerpu process was just as important as the policy recommendations of the jurors. The level of insight and depth of understanding achieved by all groups also went far beyond what would normally be achieved by opinion polls, questionnaires or focus groups. Rather than hearing arguments for and against farming technologies and approaches, the jurors themselves could make an informed decision and compare alternative livelihoods strategies with one another. Citizen empowerment came from the ability of jurors to cross-examine witnesses (who included policy-makers), to offer illustrations of evidence they had heard or observed themselves, and indeed to offer counterarguments to the very groups who have an impact on their future.

In conclusion, the policy-makers associated with Vision 2020 were urged to consider these views and urgently review their assumptions, as were those involved in other mega-projects such as the Narmada Dam or the introduction of “green revolution” technologies. The Narmada Dam concerns the Indian government’s plan to build 30 large, 135 medium and 3,000 small dams across the Narmada River and its tributaries. The issue is highly contested, with proponents claiming that the dams will provide large amounts of valuable water and electricity, while opponents question whether these basic assumptions are valid and that other socially and environmentally alternatives are just as viable (Narmada, 2003).

Further reviews would include activities of the kind practiced in the Prajateerpu process (Pimbert and Wakeford, 2002a,b). Certain elements of the UK press, in particular the *Guardian*, are widely reporting this lack of voice of poor people in large projects and the approaches developed by Prajateerpu. However, it remains to be seen what level of impact this will have on the Vision 2020 process and its outcome, and indeed how the media and lobbying by poor people will affect the eventual direction of Vision 2020.

Prajateerpu is an attractive proposition, though the constraints on it should be considered. One is that outlined by Amalric (2001): “How can people who face pressing immediate needs have the time and energy to contribute to development? Practices and processes must address immediate needs or fulfill intrinsic rights, while simultaneously fostering the process of development and allowing poor people’s voices to be heard.” However, the depth of feeling regarding Vision 2020 appears to have led to a mobilization of these groups.

The design of Prajateerpu ensured that participants were linked to wider policy networks and those that have a bearing on policy change such as advisory committees, technical bodies and civil servants. For the long-term success of this type of approach, however, it is essential that intermediate individuals and channels exist to act between the jury and those with the power to create change (Pimbert and Wakeford, 2002a). Overall, the Prajateerpu process was said to have stressed the primacy of politics over economics, thus reaffirming the importance of a participatory empowerment process and showing a grassroots vision of sustainable agricultural livelihoods options (Pimbert and Wakeford, 2002a).

### **Linear or Radical Process**

Policy reform has traditionally been viewed as a linear process where civil servants report to a body of people, and set policy and institutions through a decision-making process. However, policies and institutions cannot and should not be considered independent of people – they are shaped by the opinions of policy-makers who are affected by the views of those the policy affects. Policy change or reform processes rarely involve rational or linear decision-making, but are processes of politics, negotiation, cooperation, history and decision-making by differing groups of stakeholders (DFID, 2001). Policy and institutional reform often possess these characteristics (DFID, 2001):

- They are incremental, in which small changes are made to existing policy.
- They are strongly influenced by previous policy; new radical policies are hard to implement as they represent new, unknown concepts and ideas.
- They are shaped and influenced by a wide range of stakeholders.
- Political civil servants or bureaucrats are not neutral formulators of policy; they have their own political agenda and hence will set policy to suit their own ambitions.

In terms of implications for policy reform processes, according to DFID (2001), the cause of poverty can be traced to policies that place poor people at a disadvantage. Unfortunately, incremental changes to existing policy are not always an option when attempting to remedy disparities in policies. It may indeed be that radical reform may be required, therefore disagreeing with an incremental approach. Radical reforms run contrary to the perceived incremental approach to policy change, but may be needed to address poverty, with these components.

- They involve the introduction of new, unknown concepts and ideas, challenging long-term established views of how things are to be done.
- They do, however, rapidly create new opportunities for poor people to exploit.
- Those who previously benefited will not like such approaches and are likely to be both influential and strongly resist such actions.
- They challenge the political authority of policy-makers and incur costs.
- They require new systems and often need to reform organizations.

These barriers to change are considerable and usually mean that policy and institutional reform do not take place on their own. However, substantial reform has been observed and continues. These provide guidance on ideal conditions or those that are favorable to “radical” policy change (DFID, 2001):

- Crises – countries that face crisis are often forced to adopt new approaches and policies, especially when the cost of not changing is greater than that of instigating a radical change.
- Leadership – this consistently plays its part in reforms: those who have a vision and are strong champions of change.
- New ideas from elsewhere.

Further difficulties are encountered as policy change is a long-term process, not easily measured in a one to five-year logical framework (CIDA, 1998).

## **Conclusion**

If agencies provided appropriate services, with full participation and comprehensive analysis of livelihoods, congenial governance and high levels of trust between all stakeholders, then poor people affecting policy change would be a straightforward process of participation and collaboration. However, nothing is that simple. Realistically, at the least, the concept of “good governance” and letting “those who are affected, affect the process of policy” will be context-specific.

It is for this reason that no specific template or blueprint exists. Nor should it, as this is likely to encourage the dogmatic following of such an approach, excluding the wider environment. There are many conceptual frameworks and appropriate tools available for selection in many formats. There are, however, some general points which can be outlined and services that can be supplied.

The “institutionalization of participation” is encouraged, i.e., that processes and approaches consult, collaborate and empower stakeholders, and in particular the intended recipients. This serves not only to raise awareness and increase the sense of belonging of these groups, but

encourage sustainability of the approach after the lifetime of the project. Feedback from stakeholders is one of the manifestations of consultation and is vital at both macro-levels, for example, through Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSP), or at micro-levels, e.g., through STREAM's Country Strategy Paper (CSP) process.

The idea of and movement towards decentralization may be of benefit too, as long as it is performed in an attempt at "good governance", rather than to shift workloads onto regional and local institutions. Grassroots organizations such as NGOs and local governments, which are more closely correlated with rural poor groups and able to engage with them more readily, will then be more able to assist people in affecting policy change more rapidly.

Reforms should also be meaningful. Lindsay (1999) found these points essential when considering how to make positive reforms in legislation:

- Design of law is governed by the needs, aspirations, insights and capacities of intended users of the law, not preconceptions of outsiders.
- It is wrong for a process designed to use participation to be imposed without any participation in its design.
- The capacity of people to understand and be able to use the law needs to be strengthened. This should not be just being community-focused but also directed towards government and local officials.
- The machinery of law should be improved to settle disputes and uphold rights.
- Expectations need to be realistic. Laws that attempt to change too much will be ignored, as will ones that require massive resources or drastic redesign of institutions.
- Communities and community managers must make choices and prioritize, i.e., whether to push for immediate legal changes and upset people, or work within the present structure to build alliances.

These points reiterate many of the conclusions gathered here, particularly that policy change is somewhat difficult without the participation of multiple stakeholders and the building of trust among them. This cannot occur without the raising of awareness. As mentioned in the introduction, this trust currently stands at a low level and needs to be fostered and utilized to form effective policies. A combination of appropriate service provision, participation, consultation and a move towards more considered approaches should help alleviate this. How development programs, projects and initiatives perform regarding this issue, both now and in the future – for instance regarding Vision 2020 – will directly influence this level of trust.

Hence, the success of future goals and objectives, not just concerning policy change but a multitude of developmental issues, will be affected. Although developmental thinking is constantly evolving and today's "hot topics" will no doubt be replaced by a set of new approaches (see Figure 1 again), it is logical that listening to the people we intend to benefit is a fundamental guiding principle that never changes. It is a relatively simple idea, which even today seems to be overlooked or worse, deliberately ignored.

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Table 4 Summary of Participatory Approaches and Lessons Learnt

Place and Project	Participants	General Aims	Tools Used	Positive Lessons Learnt	Constraints Revealed	Contact
<b>India</b>						
Saharapada, Orissa	The council, municipal employees, CBOs, grassroots community organizations	Create a forum for women to improve their livelihoods and status through supplementary IGAs. The emphasis is on organizing women in groups undertaking certain activities and their direct involvement in programming and management.	Public meetings, focus groups, training in developing women's skills	Success depended on linkage and business promotion	Group formation and monitoring activities proved challenging, as did funding and resource allocation	Om Prakesh and Subramaniyam Program Associate CYSYD/PLAN Project N-1, A-29, Nayapali Bhubaneswar 751015 Orissa, India +91-674-550490 +91-674-551087 p-bbst@plan.geis.com
Sohore, Madhya Pradesh: SMILE (Students Mobilizing Initiatives through Learning and Experience)	NGOs, CBOs, grassroots organizations, community, neighborhood organizations	Create a place for youth in the process of developing and formulating policy at grassroots level	Public meetings, community outreach, focus group, citizen advisory group, resource centrum	Facilitates involvement as women as well as youth; can be achieved with small budget but limited	Family obligations override all; financial limits in budget	Ms Mini Ramchandran Programme Associate SAMARTHAN E-7/81 Banker's Colony Anera Colony, Bhopal 462016 +91-0755-567625 samarth@bom6.vsnl.net.in
Kunmathukal Grama Panchayat, Kerala: "Formation of Thozhil Zela (Labor Force) for Sustainable Agriculture Development"	Government institutions, village or local self-governing body, research institutions, labor organizations, CBOs, grassroots organizations, community and neighborhood organizations	Enable the unemployed in Panchayat to form a mobilized team of agricultural workers; Ensure understanding and cooperation of people of Panchayat in achieving this	Focus group, survey, resource center, joint project teams	Strong cooperation between Panchayat and agriculture office; strong political will was evident; there was a raised awareness in communities; addresses a relevant need; element of belonging encourages involvement; massive support generated	Not supported by all farmers; technical skills hard to learn and only mastered by a few; women yet to be trained in alternative occupations	G Placid Chief Functionary SAHAYI, TC 5/789, Peroorkada PO Trivendrum 695005 +91-471-431347 sahayi@techpark.net
<b>Bangladesh</b>						
Bangladesh Nurulpur Union Council, Narsingdi District: Citizens' Participation in Health and Sanitation Project	National government, government institutions, village or local self-governing body, health organizations, local and small enterprises, CBOs, grassroots organizations	Improve the health condition of rural people through the practice of using hygienic toilets	Public meetings, surveys, formation of committee, committee meeting, create scope for income generation, campaign through individual motivation	Continued cooperation and coordination among local level councilors due to huge demand and raised expectations	Inadequate supply for demand; interference of local elite; lack of coordination between community and decision-makers	Rita Sen Coordinator, Research PRIP Trust 59/a, Satmosjid Road Dhanmondi R/A Dhaka 1209 Bangladesh 811-5953, 811-9111 rita@prip.org

A REVIEW OF LESSONS LEARNT IN ENABLING PEOPLE'S PARTICIPATION IN POLICY-MAKING PROCESSES

Place and Project	Participants	General Aims	Tools Used	Positive Lessons Learnt	Constraints Revealed	Contact
<b>Philippines</b> Irosin, Sorsogon: Integrated Area Development Program	The council, municipal employees, service NGOs, national enterprises, CBOs, grassroots organizations, communities and neighborhoods	Foster social equity; improve quality of life; Promote people's empowerment; Improve basic social services delivery to institutionalize multi-sectoral approach, cooperation and people's collective participation in local governance	Workshops, consultation, conference	Participation worked due to successful collaboration placing people at the center of a partnership between government, NGOs and people's organizations	Improving the management skills of farmers	Nathaniel G Balnes Municipal Mayor of Irosin Municipal Hall, Irosin Sorsogon Philippines
Naga City: Participatory Planning Initiative (NCPPI)	The council, municipal employees, village or local self-governing body, service NGOs, national enterprises, local and small enterprises, CBOs, grassroots organizations, neighborhood and community organizations	Improve local governance in Naga City through partnership and participation of the people; involvement of citizens in development planning; greater people's participation in governance, including local development planning	Workshops, training and consultation	Participation planning was found to be a better way of managing and strengthening an organization		Sulpicio S Rocco, Jr City Mayor J Miranda Avenue Naga City 4400 63 (054) 473-2240 SSR@mozcom.com
<b>Vietnam</b> Halong City: Public Administration Reform (PAR)	Government institutions, the council, municipal employees, village or local self-governing body, labor organizations, national enterprises, local and small enterprises, CBOs, grassroots organizations, neighborhood organizations	Building a model of effective and efficient administration satisfying people's aspirations	Open house, public meetings, community outreach, citizen advisory groups	Spirit of the approach is positive and encouraging	Skill levels of participants such as civil servants	Nguyen Xuan Truong Chairman of Peoples Committee of Halong City Le Thanh Tong Street 033-825-611

INVESTIGATING IMPROVED POLICY ON AQUACULTURE SERVICE PROVISION TO POOR PEOPLE

Place and Project	Participants	General Aims	Tools Used	Positive Lessons Learnt	Constraints Revealed	Contact
<b>Indonesia</b> Bandung, Cibangkong Sub-district Infrastructure Development (ID) Program	National government, government institutions, the council, municipal employees, service NGOs, local and small enterprises, CBOs, grassroots organizations, community and neighborhood organizations	Social transformation of key people in urban development; restructuring slum area to improve efficiency of land use; development of management pattern for sustainable and environmental urban land use; plan a program identifying the participation of small business in the community; formulate a supporting system to prepare guidance in optimizing the participation of community small businesses	Open house, public meetings, participatory design of plans	Creating support from all parties to improve the environment	Lack of funding	Ms Ir Hibrani Andam Dewi Head of Urban Division BAPPEDA City Hall Bandung
<b>Thailand</b> Bangkok: Rongnankang Community	National government, the council, municipal employees, service NGOs, national enterprises, CBOs, grassroots organizations, community and neighborhood organizations	Enhancing the participation of people in community management development	Open house, public meetings and hearings, community outreach workshop, participatory design of plans, focus groups, survey, mediation, citizen advisory group, resource center, lobbying, forums	70% are Islamic and they identify with one another	Too exclusive	Ms Nathanan Thavisin Deputy Permanent Secretary Bangkok Metropolitan Administration Bangkok 10200 Thailand 66-2-224 2968 nathanon@bma.go.th www.bma.go.th

All case studies obtained from Asian Participatory Studies (undated)

## Annex – Figure 1 Glossary

*Critique of Participation:* The enthusiasm for participatory management and approaches must be considered alongside an ongoing assessment of factors which constrain successful and sustained practice, such as institutional arrangements which often reproduce the social relationships that marginalize certain groups of people.

*Dual Economy Model:* This model views the agriculture sector as the basis of an emerging economy and a generator of capital needed to support the second stage of economic development, that is, industrialization. Once this has occurred, agriculture becomes redundant (Blunch and Verner, 1999).

*Environment and Sustainability:* Ensuring that future productivity depends on the non-depleting use of resources and preservation of goods and services provided by the environment.

*Farming Systems Research (FSR):* Farming Systems Research relates to the whole farm rather than individual elements; it is driven more by overall farming household welfare than yield and profitability goals. Farming systems are closely linked with livelihoods as agriculture remains the single most important component of rural people's lives and an important component in the peri-urban context (NRI, 2003).

*Gender and Development (GAD):* In the GAD approach, improving the status of women is no longer considered an issue by itself. Instead, it is a goal, the attainment of which requires active participation and harmonious relations between men, women, their families, their community, and their environment (SEAMEO, 2003).

*Green Revolution:* Referring to the period 1967-78 (India Onestop, 2003), the Green Revolution was a movement to increase crop yields by introducing new crop cultivators and irrigation, and thus multiple harvests, fertilizers, pesticides and mechanization. Primarily associated with, although not specific to, India.

*Induced Innovation:* Inventions are induced by economic forces. A relationship between the technical change and a measure of factor scarcity exists. Growth is generated by technical change that facilitates the substitution of relative abundant factors for relative scarce factors (Thirtle et al., 1995).

*Integrated Rural Development:* Integrated approach to development, taking a holistic approach and consideration of factors such as social, economic, institutional and environmental, in the development of appropriate poverty reduction approaches, strategies and technologies.

*Modernization:* The idea that large-scale farming using mechanized technology is more efficient than traditional forms (Ellis and Biggs, 2001).

*Peasants, Lazy:* That householders do not react to changes in their environment and do not make rational decisions in response to these.

*Peasants, Rational:* That householders will reallocate and diversify household labor in reaction to economic changes and fundamental changes and opportunities, changing to non-

farm work only when subsistence needs are met (Keister and Nee, 2001). Small-farmers are rational economic agents making efficient farm decisions (Schultz, 1964).

*Poverty Alleviation, Poverty Reduction, Poverty Eradication:* Three fundamentally similar guiding themes used over time to describe the ultimate aims of development (Ellis and Biggs, 2001), that is, to both lessen the burden and reduce the number of those who could be described as living in poverty.

*Rural Growth Linkage:* The rural growth linkage model argues that in poor rural economies agriculture is the best, and sometimes only, engine of growth (ODI, 2003). Rising agricultural output in the small-farm sector results in rural growth linkages that spur the growth of labor-intensive non-farm activities in rural areas, and these linkages are higher than for large farms (Ellis and Biggs 2001; Johnston and Kilby, 1975; Mellor, 1976). The growth of the non-farm economy depends on the vitality of the farm economy, without agricultural growth in rural areas (Singh, 1990).

*Sector Wide Approaches:* An approach where the cross-sectoral and multi-occupational diversity of rural livelihoods is recognized, and where, for instance, agriculture takes its place along with a host of other actual and potential activities, both rural and non-rural, without undue preference given to one as a unique solution to rural poverty (Ellis and Biggs, 2001).

*Social Protection:* Defined as the set of policies and programs designed to reduce poverty and vulnerability by promoting efficient labor markets, diminishing people's exposure to risks, and enhancing their capacity to protect themselves against hazards and interruption or loss of income (ADB, 2003).

*Structural Adjustment:* Economic and legislative reforms, for instance, change from planned to market economy (World Bank, 2003).

*Transformation Approach:* One that instigates strategies of change, characterized by the introduction of a wide variety of large-scale farming and processing technologies (Ozawa, 1997).

*Women in Development:* Women are considered, participate fully and benefit from development.