

ANGOC REACTION PAPER¹

1. On behalf of the Asian NGO Coalition (ANGOC), I would like to thank the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) as organizer of this thematic dialogue for inviting my organization as one of the reactors of this preparatory event to the International Conference on Agrarian Reform and Rural Development (ICARRD) to be held in Brazil on 07-10 March 2006. ICARRD is a welcome opportunity, and we hope that 40 years after the World Land Conference and 27 years after the World Conference on Agrarian Reform and Rural Development (WCARRD), a strong political commitment and drastic and lasting actions be taken by different stakeholders in implementing genuine agrarian reform. It should be noted that WCARRD marked a watershed in bringing global recognition and consensus on the need for agrarian reform, and its Charter recommended various actions to promote the following components of agrarian reform: access to land, water and other natural resources; people's participation; the integration of women in rural development; access to inputs, markets and services; the development of non-farm activities; and the need for education, training and extension.
2. ANGOC was borne out of country consultations that culminated in WCARRD. Its founders from various Asian NGOs all held that agrarian reform was a fundamental element to eradicate poverty. ANGOC continues to believe that agrarian reform is essential to the development of Asian rural communities. Access to land brings livelihood, reduces social tensions and conflicts over natural resources, achieves sustainable management of lands, and improves overall peace for greater political and economic stability. Land is NOT just an economic commodity but a necessary instrument of equity for the poor.
3. Over the past few decades' civil society participation has become accepted as essential to the democratization process at the local, national and international levels. But despite such realization, the involvement of the rural poor has tended to be limited, particularly to implementation phase. The practice of quality participation continues to lag the rhetoric. Two related questions should be answered in view of participation: the objective of participation and the impact of participation.
4. In most of the literature of Asian NGOs, participation is seen in the following context: a) a process of empowerment, towards self-help and change, b) organized action is the principal form by which the poor are able to exercise and assert their power, c) seeks to enhance the in-built capacities and to heighten the critical consciousness and awareness of the poor, and d) often requires the intervention of a catalyst or facilitator, a role often played by NGOs/CSOs. Participation must lead to an empowerment process "by which people become conscious of the structural causes of their poverty and or exploitation, and then to organize to use their collective skills, energies and resources to alter these conditions" (IREC, 1992). In the end, power and control are two fundamental concepts in participation that governments as well as international development agencies should be prepared in engaging the poor in such process.

¹ Reaction paper of ANGOC presented at the *Philippine National Stocktaking and Thematic Dialogue: "New Challenges and Options for Revitalizing Rural Communities"*, held on 10 January 2006, at the SEAMEO Innotech Building, Diliman, Quezon City, Philippines.

The Asian NGO Coalition for Agrarian Reform and Rural Development (ANGOC) is a regional NGO association of 21 national and regional NGO networks from 11 Asian countries actively engaged in food security, agrarian reform, sustainable agriculture and rural development activities. Its member-networks have an effective reach of some 3,000 NGOs throughout the region. ANGOC was founded in Bangkok in February 1979, following a two-year series of village- and national-level consultations in 10 Asian countries leading to the World Conference on Agrarian Reform and Rural Development (WCARRD, Rome, 1979).

This reaction paper draws heavily from the insights and recommendations from previous studies and statements of ANGOC. Paper presented by Nathaniel Don E. Marquez. Mr. Marquez is currently the Executive Director of ANGOC. Mr. Marquez has been in the development work since 1989.

5. An ANGOC study identified three sets of indicators as measures of success of effective participation, namely, (a) the increased skills of the leaders, (b) increased activeness by the members and (c) better projection of the organization in the local community. Effective participation by the leaders can be seen in their ability to assert their ideas, negotiate with local government officials, mobilize their constituents and further develop their skills as leaders. Activeness of the members is manifested in the increased attendance at organizational meetings, eagerness to assert their ideas at meetings, gatherings and other activities. Better projection would mean being consulted, and/or able to influence individuals from both the local government and the community.
6. Because of the effectiveness of people's participation in local governance, consequences should result to gains achieved in three dimensions, namely a) policy, b) civil society and c) democracy (Miller, 1994). At the policy level, success would mean adoption and legislation of the PO/NGO development agenda; success at civil society level would mean strengthening NGOs/POs that can keep government "accountable and responsive to community needs". And success in democracy means expanding the democratic space in which NGOs and POs function, increasing their political legitimacy and improving the attitudes and behaviors of government officials and elites toward NGOs and grassroots groups.
7. It is to my understanding that this thematic dialogue will contribute to the processes leading to ICARRD. Three points should be mentioned before further proceeding of our reactions based on previous studies and statements prepared by ANGOC. First, there has been little time to review the documents for this thematic dialogue, as I was only able to download and read the files yesterday. Nevertheless, in general, I agree on the issues and recommendations presented this morning by the three distinguished discussants. Second, ANGOC is one among many of the non-government organizations involved in this topic, and hence I can only share the viewpoint of my organization based on the results of our experiences in field implementation and advocacy efforts. Third, given the two constraints, I suggest that the process of consultation, particularly to civil society organizations should not end today. In fact, in my previous meeting with Undersecretary for Support Services of the Department of Agrarian Reform Mr. Gerundio Madueño, we have an understanding that a roundtable discussion with civil society organizations shall be organized to continue this process leading to ICARRD, in generating inputs on the FAO-PPLG Study as well as to the Philippine Voluntary National Report to ICARRD.
8. On this context that I will focus my input due to limited time and the complexity of the topic, on some of the policy and implementation issues in relation to agrarian reform and access to land in the Philippines. For in the end, it is my belief that improved participation in policy-making should eventually lead to greater access to resources, particularly land by the rural poor. It goes without saying that there have been advances in implementing agrarian reform in the country but my task at hand is to surface these challenges on how to enhance the program's implementation.
9. Access to land in the Philippine context is vital, as the poor heavily depend on it for their livelihood and welfare. About $\frac{3}{4}$ of the poor make a living from agriculture and fisheries. The urban poor are also dependent on land, as housing provides them access to the urban economy. The issue of access to land has diverse meanings to various sectors of society. To most poor families, access to land brings access to a source of livelihood, an increased sense of security, an increased level of resilience. For indigenous people communities, the right to land carries the right to self-determination, cultural integrity and autonomy.
10. In the ANGOC Policy Paper, we note that agrarian reform is a continuing political process since it involves changing power relations. Even after legislative reforms are instituted, there is a need for constant public vigilance and pressure to influence governments to exert political will for agrarian reform. Indeed, many past agrarian reform legislations were never fully implemented. Official policies often lack continuity, as government priorities tend to shift with each change in government administration. And even if agrarian reform policies are successfully instituted at one period, political elites tend to reverse

the reform gains made through succeeding administrations. Experience also shows that rural elites have been capable of regaining the land redistributed to peasants in due course. These are done through money lending, land purchase, leaseback arrangements, and outright eviction.

11. Hence, even today, 19 years after the legislation of CARL, Philippine social movements continue to mobilize for implementation of the 1987 Agrarian Reform program. The approaches taken by Philippine CSOs have ranged from persuasion and negotiation to direct pressure through court cases, media, street protests, hunger strikes, and even through non-violent, extra-legal measures such as the direct dismantling of fences and barriers in awarded lands. Quizon, Polestico and Hildemann note two other forms of NGO/PO involvement in implementing agrarian reform are a) direct implementation of the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program (CARP) and b) building development alternatives. "Either acting independently, or through tripartite working arrangements with the government, NGOs and POs have helped in identifying local beneficiaries, organizing and strengthening farmer organizations, documenting and monitoring land cases, extending legal education and assistance, directly providing support services in credit, extension and health, and setting-up local post-harvest and off-farm activities. In the work on agrarian reform, some NGOs have begun to take on a fundamental re-thinking of their social organizing strategies – i.e., focusing on integrated area development, looking into 'ecological zones' as defined by watershed systems rather than political boundaries, or linking-up farmer-producers with consumers."
12. The ANGOC Policy Paper notes the dilemma of decentralization and devolution. While the decentralization and devolution of central State powers has often been equated with "good governance", agrarian reform activists tend to view such efforts with mixed sentiments. On the one hand, devolution brings government closer to the people; it increases people's access to local services and programs; and it enables people to demand more services from their local government. But since most local governments are captured by the local landed elite, in most cases devolution merely increases the power of local elites to consolidate their assets and to thwart efforts at social reform. As such, increasing the power of local landed elites is likely to reinforce practices of political patronage and feudal dependence – the same values that agrarian reform itself seeks to change.
13. Experience has shown that decentralization without property reform brings greater politicization of land issues. This often happens in several forms – i.e., the wholesale conversion of lands to other uses in order to avoid coverage under existing agrarian reform programs; the granting of public leases and concessions to kin and favored businesses; the manipulation of land and farm production records to get higher land valuations in cases of land-for-sale, or to lower one's taxes; direct harassment of local activists and farmer groups, use of the local police, or withdrawal of support from NGOs and farmers advocating for agrarian reform.
14. As agriculture gets increasingly feminized, increasingly larger numbers of rural women and female-headed households will be left with the prime responsibility for farming and household incomes. Thus, land reform programs should clearly address women's concerns. It is not sufficient to advocate for new agrarian reform legislations and policies; equal attention should be given to those *existing* laws and practices that currently curtail equal property rights for women. The more difficult task, however, will be to "reform" existing customary practices and social norms that currently discriminate against women's access to land.
15. In most cases it is administrative practices and biases that curtail women's equal property rights. Under the Philippine agrarian reform program, over half of the land certificates issued still does not include the name of wife, despite a department order to include the name of both spouses. In the study conducted by Quizon, Polestico and Hildemann, it has been noted in their review of literature that available data shows limited representation of women in officially recognized organizations and bodies related to agrarian reform. Furthermore, it was observed that there is lack of benchmark data on gender issues.

16. Conflicts and disputes in land policy issues continue to plague the agrarian reform program in the country as stated in the LAND Partnership Study prepared for ANGOC.

For instance, lands with slopes above 18 degrees are classified as forestlands. However, the actual delineation of forestlands remains unclear. Moreover, the land categories do not reflect actual land use. Protected areas, for instance are designated as “common property,” i.e. owned by the State, but private individuals and groups through arrangements such as leasehold can enjoy usufruct rights. The Indigenous People’s Rights Act (IPRA), which recognizes, protects and promotes ancestral domain rights, has also raised some property rights issues, for instance, with regards to mines and minerals. The Philippine Constitution under the principle of Regalian Doctrine provides that all natural resources, particularly minerals, are owned by the State. On the other hand, under IPRA, ancestral domains include mineral lands.

17. There have been overlaps in land related reforms as well. In some areas, tenurial rights have been granted to upland dwellers under the Integrated Social Forestry (ISF) program, or land certificates (CLOAs) given to lowland farmers under CARP – covering lands under pending ancestral domain claims. While Philippine laws clearly indicate that indigenous people’s rights as superior over other rights, land access questions do arise, such as how to treat equally poor non-IP settlers within CADC or CADT lands.
18. Another major weakness of Philippine land policy cited in the said Study is the failure to clearly identify society’s preferences regarding land use. Hence, significant problems often arise in the use and allocation of land, e.g., the continuing tension behind the conversion of agrarian reform lands to non-agricultural uses as well as conflicting laws enacted for the classification or re-classification of lands. Meanwhile, the need to legislate a Land Use Act has been endorsed by civil society groups as early as 1996 under *Agenda 21* of the Philippine Council for Sustainable Development (PCSD), yet a draft bill has been languishing in Congress.
19. Interviews conducted in relation to the LAND Partnership Study indicated that CSOs have expressed concern over an emerging policy shift towards more market-oriented land reforms. Two major concerns cited were the “Farmland as Collateral Bill” now pending in Congress, and proposals to amend the 1987 Constitution, particularly the current restrictions concerning foreign ownership of land.
20. Meanwhile, there has been wide appreciation of the importance of the ongoing Land Administration and Management Project (LAMP). The continuing success of this long-term project will depend on continued political support from successive administrations and the public. However, as CSOs have pointed out in the LAND Partnership Study, good land administration may indeed ensure the efficiency of the land titling system, but land administration is *not* land reform itself.
21. To resolve ‘access to land’ problems and issues, institutional partnerships are forged at different levels and in different stages of program development. The LAND Partnership Study identifies some of the key mechanisms that tackle issues on access to land by basic sectors such as the farmers/farm workers, urban poor and indigenous peoples. A summary assessment of the 24 GO-CSO mechanisms as drawn from interviews and discussions, secondary sources, and researchers’ assessment indicate that: a) majority of the mechanisms have a highly sectoral focus, b) there are few GO-CSO mechanisms that deal with cross-sectoral land issues such as land conversion; or bring together different sectors to dialogue, c) mechanisms that discuss cross-sectoral land issues are mainly limited to government agencies, d) accomplishments and continuity highly depend on political will of incumbent government officials, e) turfing/ overlapping roles of government agencies on some functions delay accomplishments, and f) questions arise as to whether local constituencies are adequately informed of national-level discussions and agreements.

22. Participation has been a civil society battle cry from the '70s to the '80s until the doors to decentralization opened wide in the '90s. The main intentions of decentralization and other participatory mechanisms are to bring governments closer to the people, thereby improving its programs, services, and systems of accountability.
23. With the current rate of participatory governance involving civil society, implementation-wise CSOs are faced with the following tasks to maintain our gains: a) areas of sustaining and expanding the gains from concrete and specific work of interventions at the local level, b) building institutional strength and capacities to better serve the public alongside partnerships with local governments, and c) ensuring participatory processes are inclusive of the various concerned sectors in local development.
24. The LAND Partnership Study recommends five broad thematic areas that will require multi-stakeholder consultation, consensus building and joint action. The said Study suggests that any of these themes could well institute the focus of potential land partnership, to wit: a) regular mechanisms that monitor and ensure the inclusion of access to land, especially agrarian reform in the national development agenda/programs; b) implementation of existing land redistribution/reform programs e.g., CARL, IPRA, UDHA, by addressing program requirements, resolving policy bottlenecks, and by improving field-level complementation between government and CSOs; c) convening of inter-sectoral and multi-stakeholder discussions and negotiations to resolve policy conflicts and overlapping institutional mandates related to land reforms and land administration policies; d) undertake consensus-building and pro-active advocacy for new legislation i.e., land use; and e) convening policy forums on pending bills and programs that threaten the reverse the gains made under land-related reforms i.e., farm as collateral.
25. Let me end with a Filipino saying that I think best explains that in the end, political will is what is needed to ensure the poor's participation in decision-making processes towards their empowerment: "*Kung ayaw nating gawin, maraming dahilan, kung gugustuhin natin, maraming paraan.*" ("We have many excuses for things that we do not want to do, but we find ways to accomplish those that we want done.")

Marami pong salamat. (*Thank you very much.*)

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Thematic Dialogue:
New Option and Challenges for Revitalizing Rural Communities
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I'm very glad that FAO has invited me to be a reactor of this workshop. I don't know really the reason. I'm already out of communication with anti-poverty groups. And I'm dealing more on the corporate world. More profit this time. It's a quite different world from the anti-poverty groups, like this group. So maybe I have to change now my own paradigm at this point and maybe try to react on the papers of the discussants this morning.

We had very good papers presented a while ago by the three discussants. You know it's very awkward for me to react on papers prepared by my former colleagues, or my bosses actually. Particularly Ding Navarro who has been very helpful in my foreign-assisted projects when I was still with the Department of Agrarian Reform. *Yan yung hinihila ko pag nag-a-ICC ako e. Para sya yung unang banatan para kaibigan nya lahat dun. Saka bahala na kami sa technical. Sya yung aming sinasabak sa mga discussions doon.* (I used to ask for his help when I defend projects before the ICC. So he is the first one who gets grilled; the ICC members are all his friends. We take care of the technical aspect but he takes the lead in the discussions.)

Anyway, and I'm very glad that a while ago he was able to present a very good paper that's trying to show not only his experience as an NGO practitioner but also a bureaucrat, once upon a time. He has been a bureaucrat and that's the reason why his paper basically showed to us all the dimensions, the problems, not only on the NGO side but also on the part of the government.

I'm very glad also that the paper of Alex was a very good paper, considering the importance of devolution, and particularly, I was struck when he said that there will be no perfect devolution/decentralization. This is basically what I am trying to do now in my economic zone. It's to decentralize development to focus now in my area, and basically, it is said that there will be no sort of a decentralization without financial devolution or decentralization. And it's also quite correct.

Paano ka mag-o-operate kung wala kang pera in the first place? (How can you operate if you do not have the funds in the first place?) But I think that is not the answer. I will go back to that later on. And also, Austere Panadero happens to be also a colleague in DAP. *Eto yung mga boss ko, si Ding Navarro and si Austere sa DAP. Mga boss ko yan lahat dati.* (They are my former bosses, Ding Navarro and Austere at DAP.) So, it's good also that he presented the view of the government, and the reason why we would like to involve the civil society in the whole development process. And he has also identified some bottlenecks and things to be done for improvement and maybe on how we would be able to really see how we would be able to convince civil society to participate in the whole development process of the government.

But let me try to go back to the individual documents and try to look at the special features that I was able to remember. Because there were a lot of these papers and it was only this morning that I was trying to read some important features of their papers. And for my former boss, Ding Navarro, it is quite true in his observation that there are local government units who would want to recognize the roles of the civil society in the Local Development Council. You know, when I was still Director of the Department of Agrarian Reform, a Mayor and a Governor visited me and asked me on how DAR accredits an NGO so that, at least, they would use that to get involved in their LDCs. So I showed the criteria prepared by Susan, I think this is the BARBD

group, that came up with the procedure on “how to accredit a civil society” on the part of the Department. But you know, the the Mayor and the Governor said, “*Ah ganyan ba? E papano kung ang mapipili namin ay may political difference from the Mayor, eh di magulo yan.*” (“Is that so? So, what will happen if the NGO that will be selected has political differences with the Mayor?) That’s the immediate reaction of the Mayor – “*magulo yan! Kokonti na nga lang ang panahon namin, tatlong taon, guguluhin pa ba namin. So basically, kung papasok na yang mga tao na yan, magugulo yung aming mga council.*” And you know the suggestion, “*pwede ba na kami na ang mag-develop ng civil societies namin?*” That was the reaction. *Pwede ba na yung aking misis mag-organize ng sariling civil society para yun na lang ang magcre-credit para sya na lang ang magiging legitimate NGO dun sa council? It’s very practical on their part because ayaw nila ng magulo. But sabi ko, di ho yun yung spirit ng participation.* (“that will make the situation difficult! Our term is so short, only three years, and we will make the situation worse. So, basically, if these persons will be involved, they will affect the operations of the council.” And the suggestion was, “can we develop our own civil society?” That was the reaction. “Can my wife organize a civil society which can be accredited and will eventually be the legitimate NGO representative in the council?” It’s a very practical move on their part because they do not want complications. However, I explained to them that it is contrary to the spirit of participation.)

I was telling them, you know, (*ganito-ganito ho yan*)... “*Pero magulo ho yan. Buti kayo, hahaba pa, siguro anim na taon pa kayo kung di papalitan ang Secretary nyo. Hahaba kayo. May career kayo, pero kami, kung maglalagay pa kami ng NGO, sa susunod na election, yung NGO, magiging Mayor na. Sya papalit sa amin.*” (*It’s like this.. what you’re suggesting will disrupt the situation. You are fortunate because there is a possibility that your term will be extended for another six years if your Secretary will not be replaced. You have a career. But in our case, if we allow an NGO to be a member, it is likely that he will be elected as Mayor in the next election.*) So basically, this is the resistance of the Local Government Unit in really trying to get involved the civil society. *Sabi nga nila, maiingay yan.* (As they say, they [NGO’s] are noisy.)

Actually *tama nga yung sabi ni Ding* (Ding was right when he said that), basically, some of them are branded communists. “*Kung komunista yan, pano na kami? Syempre magagalit sa amin yung mga militar.*” (If they are communists, what about us? Naturally, the military will be angry at us.) So, these are the things, and I think, these are the common problems *ng karamihan ng ating* (in most of our) local government units. Not only maybe in my area, but basically, *marami akong na-meet na mga Governors, Mayors, na ganyan ang tingin nila sa civil society.* (I have met a number of Governors, Mayors who regard civil society as such.) And something should be done with this outlook – *sa mga tingin nila sa* (that is how they view) civil society. Maybe it’s about time for the civil society organization to try to organize themselves and try to come up with something else. Because, *yun ang tingin nila e, yung mga politicians, yun ang tingin sa civil society sa baba.* (That’s the impression of the politicians towards civil society.)

And another problem, as he mentioned a while ago, is that accordingly it is *very expensive.* It was also mentioned that there is no devolution, no budget was released, so we cannot fund the salaries.) There is no other source of income to support an NGO representative or whatever their requirements. *And sabi nga nila, nagde-depend lang kami sa IRA.* (It was pointed out that they are dependent on the IRA.) *You know, to tell you frankly, kung talagang i-examine lang ng LGU yung kanyang resources* (if the LGU will only look into its resources), *not just depending on national, dun sa IRA, mas malawak pa ang pwede nyang source of income.* (They will realize that they have an array of other sources of income.) *When I talked with the Governor in Asin, “Gov, di ba sa inyo itong lupa na ito. Prime lot ito. Nasa kalye-komersiyo.* (When I talked with the Governor in Asin, I asked him, “Governor, isn’t this land a property of the LGU? This is a prime lot; it is located in the commercial area.) Why don’t you use it? Make money out of it. You have a lot of idle assets.” The municipality, the Governor, has a lot of idle assets *na nakatiwangwang sa probinsya* (that are left unproductive in the province). Why don’t you make it productive? Make it be the source. If you are saying *na kokonti lang ang nagiging* (that you have a limited) source from the national government, but you have the assets for you to be able to generate more funds. *Pero maraming problema yan e, ganito...* (But this entails a lot of problems) in other words, maybe you have to educate the local government units to be able to mobilize resources of their own. *Di lang yung* (Not only) total dependence *kasi* (because) they use it as

escape goat. *Na yung national government daw, wala daw na nabibigay na pera. So ganito lang ang nade-deliver namin. But kung tutuusin, kung talagang marunong/magaling yung Governor/Mayor to mobilize other resources, magagwa nya.* (That, allegedly, the national government does not release funds. So, they can only deliver as much. But, in fact, if the Governor or Mayor possesses the ability to mobilize other resources, he could do it.) And I think some of the Governors are doing that. *Lalo na itong devolution, nabigyan sila ng mas malaking power.* (Especially with the devolution, they were given broader powers.) They have the corporate power. The Governor, the provincial government, and the local government units. So again, *di problema ang pera kung tutuusin. Kung papaano i-convert ito into pera, yun ang dapat nilang atupagin. And basically, sabi ko, kailangan nyo yung tulong ng ibang lahat ng stakeholders ng sector para magawa nyo ho yan. So that is one issue na di naman talaga problema ang pera. Pero maybe talagang dapat tingnan siguro ng civil society, tulungan siguro yung mga local governments to be able to generate resources, diba?* (actually, money is not a problem. How to convert the resource into money that is where they should direct their efforts. Basically, I said that they need the help of all stakeholders from all sectors to be able to accomplish their objective. So, that is one issue, that money is not really the problem. However, civil society needs help local governments in generating resources.) And even the NGO themselves, they should be able to generate their own funding for themselves.

So papano ka tutulong sa isang LGU, sabi nga ni Ding, kung walang expertise yung civil society dun na jo-join the council? Ano sya, dekorasyon lang sya dun? So basically, these are problems that we encounter with the local government units, yung sinasabi nilang financing, etc. Sabi nga, maraming findings, maraming (How will it help an LGU, according to Ding [Navarro], if the civil society that will be joining the council does not have the necessary expertise? Will it [the civil society] only be a decoration in the council? So, basically, financing, etc. is a problem that we encounter with the local government units. As what has been mentioned, there are many findings, many) recommendations that were presented in the papers, which I fully agree. And as I said, that this has been a very common problem when I was still in-charge of foreign-assisted projects of the Department of Agrarian Reform, and also when I was the Acting Secretary of the Department.

Maybe, basically, the solution to your problems is not here. Maybe the solution is in Porto Alegre. Right? That is, the reason why we come out with an ICARRD is because we would like to learn what are the experiences of other countries, what have they done, for all of these things. Remember, by the way, we, with the FAO, Ed Guardian, we were the ones who negotiated this ICARRD with the Brazilian Government. And were able to talk to the, actually, Mr. Cruz here of FAO was also with us when we discussed, but the second, *dalawang beses kasi kami bumalik dun e,* (we went there twice) and we were able to discuss with the Minister of Agrarian Reform and he has asked me, "You know, we have a lot of things to learn from the Philippines, in the field of agrarian reform." Yes, it's true, that we are the country with the biggest land to be distributed. But you know, the agrarian reform of the Philippines is very different because there is a lot of civil society involved in the Program. And I know that they are very noisy." But I heard that even they are – that noise, according to the Minister, of course there was an interpreter telling that to us because he was not talking English, he was telling us that I think that we have to organize and he agreed that an international conference has to be sponsored, and well I was offering him for the Philippines to sponsor the first international conference, but you know, Brazilians are a little bit proud. So he said, "No, no no. We will handle it. And we'll handle all this part – the Latin America, the Europe, we'll take charge and you take charge of the Asia Pacific. And then, we'll exchange notes and inform our foreign ministry. And I think it is important that we have to learn from other countries' experience regarding agrarian reform and rural development, land reform. So ok, let's start.

Actually, my objective/target that time was to bring back agrarian reform to the international agenda. And so that's the reason why we are basically pushing for that. So I said, the solution maybe is in Puerto Alegre. So maybe you have to go to Porto Alegre to listen to all of those Ministers and Generals who are going to present their best practices, and maybe even their mistakes, and learn from them.

Di na ako lalayo. (I will not digress.) I'll go back to the agrarian reform program. *Ano bang naging role ng* (What was the role of the) NGO in the program. I joined the Department in 1989. Well, I was in the province

but it occurred to me in 1993 when I was already in the central office. And I found out that in the Department of Agrarian Reform, it is the only agency at that time that basically involve the civil society in its whole development process – in the implementation of its program, particularly in the land distribution. So *nakita ko sa* (I observed in the) identification of beneficiaries, NGOs are involved, even in the whole process, civil society was very active in land distribution, a lot of it – the involvement of the civil society. *Nagkakaroon pa nga tayo ng tripartite agreements, so maraming experimento.* (There were even tripartite agreements, so there were a number of experiments.) You know before, I don't know anything about this civil society. When they say tripartite, I was thinking of the tripod of the survey equipment. So I didn't know all these kind of... but I was surprised... but we all know that this is the civil society, the government, local government, and each joined forces to help each other, identifying problems, try to solve solutions, etc., etc. So what happens after that, 1992, when we have implemented and get all the civil society involved – maybe not all. But we have started to involve civil society in our programs. So from a very low accomplishment, we were able to have a tremendous accomplishment – an increase in the accomplishment, and lesser, what's the impact, lesser resistance from the landowners. Because you know, there was this civil society supporting the Department at that time. And not only that, let me go to my field – the support services, when we implemented the support services, when we came with the framework – the Agrarian Reform Communities Development Framework, a strategy that we developed in that ARC concept, is really a partnership among the different stakeholders. And the strong involvement of the people's organization and the civil society. The ARC, how many years from 1992 - 13 years, *nandyan pa rin sya* (they are still there) and they're expanding it. Why? Because it has been accepted. The concept has been accepted. Not only by the farmers themselves, the people's organization, it is accepted by the national government; it is accepted by the oversight government. You see, it is accepted by the donors as an effective way of delivering support services – where there is consultation at the ground level. So they see that there is the participation of all stakeholders, *ay may nangyayari* (there are results). And I think that is the reason why DAR is still surviving at this point. And not only that, in 1998, the budget of DAR was going to expire, the first 50 billion. *Sino yung naglakad nyan? Si Ka Jimmy, isa sya sa mga nagtulak para sa* (Who helped facilitate its release? Ka Jimmy, he was one of those who pursued for the release of the) second 50 billion of the Department of Agrarian Reform. The groups – civil society was the one who lobbied for the extension, for the additional funding for the Department. And that is the reason why we still exist until now because of the help of the civil society. It was not because it was basically self-serving on the part of government, like DAR, to be pushing for it. But it was the civil society- our strong partnership with the civil society that help us be able to get and we are able to get a legislation, a law basically giving us another 50 billion and extension of 10 years. And that is almost going to expire in 2008. So I do not know what is your next move. The civil society should come up with something else: either to extend or stop agrarian reform. Anyway, that is your ballgame now. But basically what I'm saying is that partnership, even in a very limited way, the Department of Agrarian Reform, there are basically tangible results. Maybe this is the thing that we can present, maybe our partnership. *Kahit man lamang yung kakaunting partnership na yan, maybe mas matindi pa siguro ang ating relationship* (If only we can make partnership as our small contribution, maybe our relationships will be stronger) compared with other countries. And I think, this is one reason the Brazilian Government would like to see that we are or what we have here in the Philippines, particularly in implementing agrarian reform and rural development. So again, I say, *baka medyo mahaba na* (this is quite long now), the solution may not be here now, in these four walls of this conference, it may not be here in the Philippines, but maybe in Porto Alegre. So the Department of Agrarian Reform, *baka tulungan nyo na sila na maka-punta dun* (maybe you can help so they can go there) to present their experiences.

Maraming salamat po at magandang hapon sa inyong lahat! (Thank you very much and good afternoon to all!)

“New Challenges and Options for Revitalizing Rural Communities”

Reaction Paper

Presented by

Assistant Secretary Dolores B. de Quiros-Castillo, MNSA, CSEE

National Anti-Poverty Commission (NAPC)

National Stocktaking and Thematic Dialogue, held 10-11 January 2006

SEAMEO INNOTECH in Diliman, Quezon City, Philippines

PRELIMINARIES

First, I'd like to take this opportunity to thank the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations and the Development Research Initiative, Inc. for inviting me to be a part of this dialogue.

I would also like to acknowledge the inspiration and contributions of the resource discussants, Mr. Conrado Navarro, Dr. Alex Brillantes, and Assistant Secretary Austere Panadero. As experts on the subject under discussion, they all articulated a rich array of insights and concepts as well as their own experiences in the arena of democratization, participation and development.

Distinguished officials of international and national agencies, people's organizations and other basic sectors present in this workshop, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen, GOOD AFTERNOON!

Let me congratulate FAO and the Development Research Initiative, Inc. for putting together this comparative study and assessment, which in its current draft is already useful, at least as far as we at NAPC is concerned. In response to the presentations, I shall attempt to provide some insights that hopefully can enhance our perspectives in appreciating the assessment and analysis.

Today's dialogue on new challenges and options for revitalizing rural communities is indeed crucial and timely – one that serves to open a wellspring of shared vision and perspectives on key development concepts and fundamentals.

As one tasked to play the role of lead reactor to the presentations earlier made by our distinguished discussants, I've chosen some focal points in the previous discussions upon which I wish to surface additional aspects or features that hopefully would enhance today's dialogue.

The first focal point focuses on people's participation, which are our key stakeholders and what participation means. It seeks to address the question on who are the key stakeholders and the process of transformation needed for rural communities/organizations to shift from “mere beneficiaries” to “active partners”.

The next focal point lies at the heart of ensuring participation in order to revitalize our rural communities. Our discussants posed specific challenges that require keen attention, if we seriously want to enhance and fully operationalize people's participation in pursuit of rural development and progress.

The third focal point looks into the possible options that may be taken in view of the hindering factors that impinge on revitalizing rural communities.

The findings and recommendations of this study and the inputs of our discussant can very well serve as our springboards to work on the following: (a) formulation, if not, the continued implementation of policies or legislation that would create the desired policy environment conducive for revitalizing rural communities towards growth, poverty alleviation and social reform; (b) development and implementation of programs and projects that would ensure faster, timely and effective delivery of basic services to the poor, especially the most vulnerable sectors of society; (c) design and institutionalization of pro-poor processes and mechanisms that would increase the participation of the poor in development initiatives; and, (d) the setting-up of additional and dedicated resources and funds to translate and operationalize the various programs and projects at the local levels, where majority of the poor are.

As may be gleaned from the framework that the discussants used, people's participation requires a holistic and integrated approach. We have realized that people participation is a dynamic and multi-faceted phenomenon in our country. And, to be able to understand and harness people's participation would require an understanding of who the stakeholders are and what participation means.

As discussed earlier, there are many legislative/policy measures that provide some definitions of people's organizations and non-government organizations. In the context of the operational framework of government's poverty reduction strategy, our key stakeholders are the basic sectors. Theoretically, the term basic sectors refer to a collective group who are "integrated and live as part of an organic community" (Katz : 1997). They identify themselves as members of a social group with common needs and aspirations, as well as a common set of basic rights, which they exercise within a given social context.

As the term "basic" connotes, these sectors form the core or the fundamental part of the "people" in society, whose collective interests and welfare are the primary concerns of the State. They have earned the recognition for providing the social, economic, cultural and political backbone that determines the sustainability and viability of the social, cultural, political, ecological and economic systems in society.

While the basic sectors may exhibit commonalities in terms of attributes and needs, there is diversity in terms of norms, values, interests and aspirations within each sector. They are faced with varying degrees and levels of difficulties or circumstances, which consequently define their demands for social equity, economic emancipation, ecological integrity and political empowerment.

Participation, on the other hand, has also been given many definitions and this would depend on how one uses the term. Its definition may focus on the process; or on the goals, outcome and its contribution; while a few emphasized on the implementor of the action, the factors that influence it, and the venue where it takes place. Participation, however, has different interpretations that have evolved in development discourse from the 1970s to the present. Some of its definitions pinpoint the importance of 'sharing the benefits from development outcomes,' to 'involvement in the evaluation of programs,' to 'increase in control over institutions that control and regulate the use of resources,' to 'creation and mobilization of organizations that respond to the needs of the poor.'

During the morning sessions, our discussants have efficiently capsulized the broad nature of the development objectives of different NGAs and the LGUs in ensuring that the basic sectors can have a stake in the processes and decisions made by these institutions. Defining the basic sector participation would necessitate describing the nature and even the mandates and responsibilities of these institutions. Nevertheless, in the Philippines, as like in other developing countries in the world, participation of the basic sector in decision-making has evolved in approach from consultations on the provision of community-based services in the 1950s and 1960s, to involvement in development projects in community-projects in the 1980s, to membership in oversight councils in the 1990s.

This evolution has, along time, helped NAPC in being able to broadly and mutually assert that participation is exercised when "people are closely involved in economic, social, cultural and political processes that affect their lives... when people have constant access to decision-making and power" (HDR, 1991: 21-22).

Furthermore, I have noted that the participation of the poor is very important in several crucial venues. These are information (timely notification of the rights and laws that protect the poor), participation (inclusion of the poor in decision-making in programs and policies through various means and venues), accountability (ability of the policy- and decision-makers to inform the poor of the implications of programs and projects) and capacity-building (ensuring that the poor are part of organizations that make their voices heard and demands are met).

More specifically, we can see a typology of the participation of the marginalized sectors in government; these include involvement in policy-making, decision-making and planning (participation in the design of policies that may involve advocacies and participation in bodies that design these policies), budget preparation (participation in the allocation of resources in the public sector), implementation of programs and delivery of services (direct participation in service provision by the organizations of the marginalized sectors), and monitoring and evaluation of programs and projects (overseeing the results and outcomes of government programs and projects).

More and more, we realize that participation is seen as a social phenomenon, which challenges both the social and political structures, and in order to initiate reforms.

Indeed our subject of discussion today is only one of the many studies that have reviewed and assessed the state and importance of participation, empowerment and inclusion (although these terms are not strictly interchangeable) of the marginalized basic sectors and the poor in decision-making.

As insinuated by our distinguished discussants, participation strengthens social cohesion and inclusiveness that can generate trust, which is crucial in implementing social and economic reforms. In other words, ensuring that the basic sectors participate in decision-making would deepen trust building so that the poor would welcome reform initiatives from the government.

We also have noted that participation, again at the macro level, also engenders the prevention of dependence on the government, and ensures that policies and programs are responsive to the people themselves. And on the part of government, participation can maximize resources (by increasing the possibility that labor, one of the poor's greatest assets, is utilized in community-based projects) and could assist in dissemination of information among different sectors and communities.

In addition, we are convinced that the participation of the basic sectors or the poor can ensure effective reach and delivery of basic services and other programs. Participation is necessary to improve livelihoods of the marginalized sectors and can lower operations and maintenance costs of project implementation. As they participate more and more in community-based projects, community groups can take more responsibilities over these projects. Also, as pointed out, these also results in transformation of individual leaders and improve responses of project managers to the needs of the community members.

Thus, the institutionalization of basic sectors' participation has been our biggest challenge in most if not all of our efforts at staging a more focused, accelerated, convergent and enhanced development at all levels, especially at the LGU level. Our concern zeroes in to processes that define the roles given to the sectors for them to be represented and be the voice of their respective constituents, as well as become planners, policy makers, and monitors of initiatives that directly or indirectly affect their lives.

A key responsibility, therefore, in institutionalizing basic sector participation is pushing the grassroots organizations of various basic sectors to the forefront of development, in poverty alleviation and governance. Thus, various legislative measures and executive policies were issued or passed that provide the legal mandates for the institutionalization of basic sectors' participation, either sectorally or collectively, in terms of perspective and coverage.

But, for government to succeed in establishing the cornerstone of a stable and reliable environment for increased people participation, we should focus in establishing a balanced perspective considering the dynamic nature and multidimensionality of basic sector participation in pursuit of our development goals, particularly in poverty alleviation.

I fully agree that in the Philippine setting, hindrances to participation are rooted in the inequitable relationships and arrangements over natural, financial, social and physical resources, structures and institutional processes, opportunities and capacities.

However, against the backdrop of unsatisfactory performance and unsuccessful initiatives to pull our key stakeholders to the center of development, we must continue to design numerous menus of interventions from which key stakeholders can play their appropriate roles, not as mere beneficiaries but as major partners of development, with keen consideration of their multifaceted nature and dynamics.

At this point, I have to say that our mandates are clear. Ensuring people's participation in essence is not only an add-on but a must do as provided for in the highest law of our country, the constitution and all other related laws that provide for their inclusion of people/basic sector as partners in development, whether it be on macro concerns or sectorally based agenda.

While in most parts of the discussions, focus was on the Local Government Code's provisions that promote people participation, let me tell you that Republic Act 8425 has provided for the institutionalization of basic sector participation as well as ensuring that the operational linkages of poverty reduction and people's participation are concretely established. The National Anti-Poverty Commission (NAPC), pursuant to the law, was created as an oversight and consultative mechanism where the basic sectors and government meet to discuss and address issues and concerns of vital importance to the people. It is also within the NAPC mechanism that government and basic sectors forge partnership and collaborative endeavors towards social reform and poverty alleviation. It, thus, becomes vital that the basic sectors' readiness in terms of its operational capability and capacity to engage and participate in government processes.

In the next five years of this Administration, NAPC will intensify its role as the primary government – basic sectors interface mechanism for collaborative policy-making, planning and action in the fight against poverty. We will work to ensure that stronger, empowered Basic Sector Councils, which have equitable geographical and gender representation, are established to push for their respective agenda.

NAPC is resolute in building the capacities of the Basic Sector Councils in policy advocacy, networking and program development for their respective sectors.

In fact, one of our marching orders is to ensure that the basic sectors continue to have a vibrant voice in formulating and monitoring social reform policies through a wider network of organizations and sectoral groups.

Local representation will also be pursued through stronger working partnerships between the Basic Sectors stronger working partnerships between the Basic Sectors and the local government units and their officials who will be at the frontline of implementing local poverty reduction plans and program.

Through the NAPC En banc, NAPC will move flagship poverty reduction and social reform programs/projects until it reaches target barangays through the local convergence groups (RKCG)/Local Poverty Reduction Action Teams). The call is to mainstream the basic sectors' visions, agendas, and programs that have been developed through years of experience in many efforts. There are many tasks ahead. But as we move on, let us think global, act local, and, do more even with less.

Thank you.

PARTICIPATION, POLICY AND DEVELOPMENT REACTION TO THREE PAPERS¹

Ben S. Malayang III

The three papers give several insights on how improved participation in policy making – as had been the experience in the Philippines – provides a better basis for decision-making and for strengthening development policy. They describe (a) how participation translates to improved stakeholders' ownership of and commitment to the policies, (b) the constraints to participation, and (c) how overcoming the constraints could open up opportunities for sustainable development.

May I submit three reactions to the three papers:

1. Decentralization and evolution are propounded as fundamental national strategies to achieve greater citizen participation in the country. The papers recognize that there is a long stretch of vertical decision-making in the Philippines so that policies are formulated by very high (and hence remote) entities with a vastly different view of reality and of policy imperatives from those actually seen by people on the ground. The papers also recognize, albeit impliedly, that conditions on the ground vary highly across the country (across many different ecosystems and socio-cultural conditions) that to achieve wider practical relevance and application, policies need to be “ground truthed” as it were through wider participation and more direct democratization of policy formulation and decisions. These are propositions that are anchored on solid facts and experience discussed in the literature. Among these are Elinor Ostrom's CIFOR works on why stakeholders participate in projects, and on the findings of the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment on how responses to ecosystem changes tend to be successful when initiated by a wide array of actors in different scales of social organization.

My concern is that these understanding of the value and occurrence of participation (and of their constraints) are mainly anecdotal and descriptive. The problematique of this workshop is to me really about predicting how participation can be made to occur, and how its processes, substance and features might be controlled so as to gain its intended development goals. We are not yet there on this, and the papers, while truly helpful, need to be read with an eye of eventually producing a calculus for anticipating how and when participation will proceed toward certain directions and substance of development policy. How do differential powers influence decisions across groups in a community, or across sectors in different tiers of governance in the country, affect the direction and substance of development policy (or of programs on rural development), when of development interests of groups shift across different production systems, or when differential powers change across sectors? How is participation and rural development facilitated or hampered by the tension between statutory governance and customary institutions? I would think that it is questions like this that we would need to eventually ask ourselves in order to have improved handle on how participation can be made to translate to better – more effective and equitable – development policies.

¹ Brillantes 2006, Panadero 2006 and Navarro 2006

2. The three papers actually provide what to me are steps forward to eventually achieving a more analytical and predictive understanding of participation. This, by the way of suggesting the conditions that are critical for decisions to move downward, toward being made by constituencies on the ground. Brillantes argues autonomy must accompany devolution and decentralization in order for local decisions to translate to meaningful development. Panadero sees the need to address certain institutional and systemic issues within the DILG and the LGUs themselves as that local decision can be integrated into national development policies. Navarro suggests actual measures to address the constraints to local participation in policy making and to rural development program execution, to widen the local substance of national development policy, Understanding these constraints is a step toward understanding the dynamics – and the predictability – of how participation translates to policy. What I suppose need to be done in addition is to begin understanding the driving, inhibiting and mediated forces that determine the mix of these conditions that could allow for participation to effect a particular direction and substance of policy. Under which mix of conditions will participation at the most local best inform development policy? Under which conditions it will not? Under what conditions participation cannot be expected to translate to policy, and under which conditions it can be? These are the questions that we need to eventually grapple with, but they cannot be meaningfully asked unless we have a better understanding of the dynamics of participation under different conditions in the country.
3. The three papers approach the problematique of participation from the supply side; i.e., from the perspective of what institutions and institutional arrangements would need to be put in place and enhanced in order to stimulate for more participation to occur. Other than brief reference to autonomy in the Brillantes paper, all three papers focus on what government could do to stimulate and provide incentives for participation. My sense is that something can be done as well in the demand side; i.e., building up an insistence on participation in all sectors and levels of citizen organization in the country. This means building up a political demand for participation (as in the case with Marcos and Cory) in addition to providing a political infrastructure for it. I think that this calls for a separate attention as to how to make this happen.

The discourse on participation is far from closed. While we celebrate that participation has been a distinct item of political reform in this country for a time now, it is still far from becoming an integral part of the institutional culture to truly backstop rural and sustainable development in the Philippines.

Closing Remarks

By

Noel De Luna

Deputy Permanent Representative to FAO / Chairperson, Steering Committee ICARRD

Usec Madueño, colleagues, fellow workers in the government, friends in civil society.

It had been a long day, let me be the first to say that this was a very fruitful exercise, not only as a way forward towards the preparation for the coming International Conference on Agrarian Reform and Rural Development but a praxis of a collective experience in people participation in decision making.

What we have heard today was to identify the elements that could improve those practices of social dialogue or negotiation with the aim of effectively bringing the practices in the policy cycle.

This is because sustainable development can only be attained if various stakeholders are committed to it and have an ownership in the process. For this to happen, stakeholders have to participate in policy making.

As a student of history, I feel that as a people, Filipinos had a history of popular participation. Unfortunately 350 years of Spanish colonization plus another 50 years or so of American colonization have stifled this spirit.

Thus, when we had our independence, our political system was practically empty of popular participation as only the elites had the luxury of decision making.

Consequently, the only avenue open for those who were marginalized politically was in leftist politics or church-based community activities.

Things changed though during the late 1980s as our amended 1987 Constitution enshrined (people participation that “the State shall encourage non-government, community based, sectoral organizations that promote the welfare of the nation;” that “the right of the people and their organizations to effective and reasonable participation at all levels of social, political, and economic decision-making shall not be abridged;” and that “ the State shall, by law, facilitate the establishment of consultation mechanisms” to achieve the objective).

With this development, it now behooves us to put this into practice since we all know that there are many ways in which the people can participate in actions that will shape their lives.

While the people are not lacking in creativity, there are some political elites who feel threatened by this newfound energy and have not gone beyond their narrow viewpoint.

I personally am convinced that more than developing paradigms and methodologies that will bring about more people centered participation; an equal amount of effort should also be made to make their elites aware and appreciate of the evolving nature of popular participation. Instead of them patronizing the poor, they should realize that the poor are equal partners in development and that their energies should be harnessed, rather than blocked.

You may not realize it but the international community looks upon the Philippines as one of the best models in Agrarian Reform and Rural Development. For this reason, they are looking forward to a bigger participation of the Philippines in the coming ICARRD. (If we cannot do this, we only have Chelly Ponce to blame.)

I think I have said a mouthful already. I will end my statement here and express the hope that we would be able to put into practice what we had discussed today and that we would also be able to share what lessons we have learned with other peoples and countries that are trying to improve their lot just as we are.

Maraming Salamat. Mabuhay.