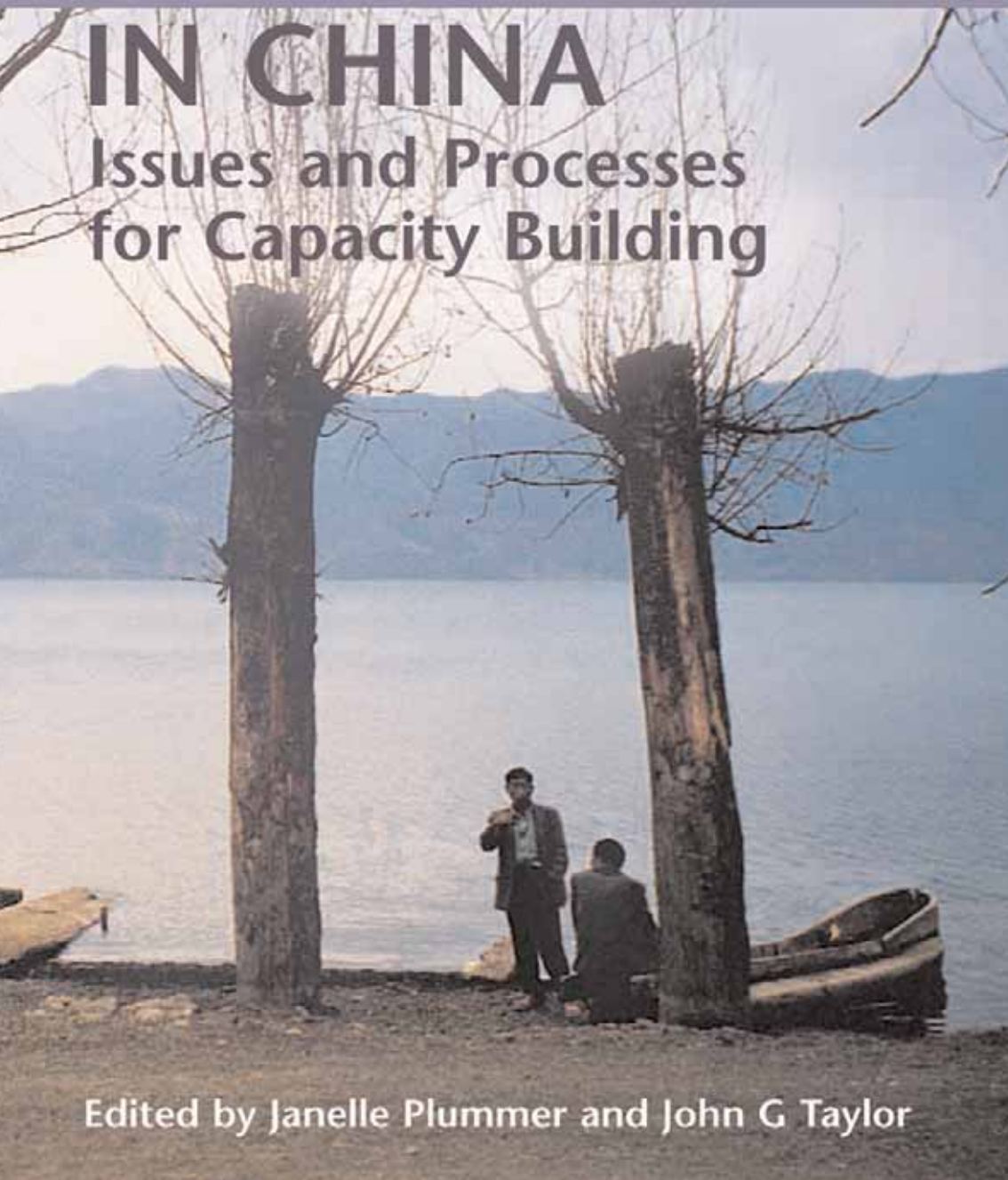
COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION IN CHINA

Issues and Processes for Capacity Building



Edited by Janelle Plummer and John G Taylor

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Research for DFID Department For International Development

GHK

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Li Ou is a senior consultant at the Centre for Integrated Agricultural Development (CIAD) and Professor and Head of the Development Management Department at

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Li Xiaoyun After studying at the Beijing Agricultural University and internationally, Li Xiaoyun worked for two years as a senior research officer at the State Council of the People's Republic of China (PRC) in the areas of agricultural development policy and, particularly, rural development policy. In 1989 he was nominated as the Director of CIAD. He played a major role in transforming CIAD into an action-oriented institute for rural development, as well as for development consultancy and research. Since the mid-1990s he has initiated a capacity-building programme for development education and built up the first college of development studies in China. He was then nominated as the Dean of the College of Humanities and Development at China Agricultural University. He is one of the few experts who have been promoting contemporary development studies, particularly participatory development and gender and development, in China. He has been given a number of awards in recognition of his contribution in these fields.

Liu Jinlong, a participatory forestry specialist in the Chinese Academy of Forestry, is also Community Development Specialist for the EU-funded Natural Forestry Management Project in China. He has worked for 13 years in agroforestry, community development and community forestry projects in China, most of them financed by international donors. In recent years, he has led research projects on China's forestry policy, in particular on the issues of forestry charging and fiscal policy supporting sustainable forestry management. He has published regular articles and essays nationally and internationally and is a co-author of publications that include *Issues and Policy Recommendations on Forestry Charging in South China Collective Forestry Area*, *Getting the Private Sector to Work for the Public Good*, *Panorama of Sustainable Forestry Management, Participation, Organization and Development* and *Who Owns Rural Development?*

Janelle Plummer is the senior institutional development specialist for the Water and Sanitation Program in East Asia, hosted by the World Bank. Before taking up this position she was an urban poverty consultant with GHK. Since her

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Joe Remenyi is Director of International and Community Development, Faculty of Arts, Deakin University, Australia, which is a distance education postgraduate programme. He has worked in community and rural development and poverty projects in China since 1991. An agricultural economist by profession, he now divides his time between development education by distance learning, short-course training, and specialist economics, design, impact assessment and poverty analysis roles in microfinance and poverty projects for multilateral, bilateral and NGO development agencies in Africa, Asia and the Pacific. He is the author of many books and learned articles, including *Where Credit is Due* (ITP, London, 1991) and *Microfinance for Poverty Alleviation* (Pinter, London, 2000).

Ren Xiaodong is Director of the Community-based Conservation and Development Research Centre. He is an Associate Professor in the Department of Biology at Guizhou Normal University in southwest China, where he has been teaching ecology to both undergraduate and graduate students. He first worked on integrating natural resource conservation with participatory rural development in nature reserves in Guizhou Province. He has conducted action research and published several articles on community-based conservation in nature reserves in Guizhou in recent years. In 1998 he and his colleagues established the Guizhou Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) Network and Community-based Conservation and Development Research Centre.

Shi Guoqing is Deputy Dean of the Economics College of Hohai University, Director of the Social Development Institute, and Director of the National Research Centre for Resettlement (NRCR). Born in Anhui Province in 1959, he received a master's degree in 1989. Since 1983 he has worked for Hohai University and conducted research in involuntary resettlement, water economics and management, development sociology and related fields. Through this research he has systematically brought forward theoretical systems for project resettlement, and has influenced the policy, theory, planning, implementation and management of resettlement. He has undertaken or acted as consultant for projects on resettlement (action plans, monitoring and evaluation, social assessment), water conservancy, electric power, urban construction, environmental protection, agriculture and transportation. These have been financed by the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank. He has published ten books and a steady stream of papers related to the above research areas.

Su Yufang, Assistant Director of the Centre for Community Development Studies (CDS), has been working as an Assistant Researcher at the Yunnan Academy of Social Sciences for more than ten years. She has conducted both internationally and locally supported projects and programmes in natural resource management, resource tenure, rural development and poverty alleviation. She has also had experience of working in government agencies, social science research institutions and local NGO and international organizations devoted to scientific-technical research. She has a BSc in Geography from Shanghai Normal University, China, and an MA in Sustainable Development from Chiang Mai University, Thailand.

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Zhang Lanying started working on the Integrated Approach to Rural Reconstruction (IIRR) in 1993. Since then, she has facilitated study programmes and training for Chinese delegations to the Philippines and Thailand. She is also involved in the Collaborative Hengxian Integrated Approach to Rural Reconstruction (CHINARR) project implementation and management. She specializes in rural development management and capacity building for NGOs. In the past, she has facilitated training and workshops in the areas of community participation, sustainable agriculture, environmental education and gender and leadership development.

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Foreword

Norman Uphoff

Community Participation in China explores the experience of introducing participatory methods for the planning and implementation of development in China, and particularly rural China. Although forms of 'participation' have occurred previously in China, since 1949 they have often been linked to the mass mobilization campaigns of the Maoist period, thereby discrediting participation in the minds of many Chinese.[1] Consequently, it is often extremely difficult to introduce participatory techniques and methods into Chinese development practice and research, particularly in the countryside.

'Participation' has been a contentious issue in a growing number of countries around the world for the past three decades because it does not come easily or naturally in nation-states. Many have had autocratic pasts that relegated popular opinion and capacities to a subordinated role, if any; and those that have had liberal democratic histories sought to channel all popular views and talents through electoral, representative institutions. For these, direct involvement in decision-making and operations was unnecessary and even often a problem. Neither kind of governance has fully appreciated the direct costs of 'friction' in carrying out programmes and policies for which there was insufficient public understanding and informed consent – or the indirect costs of forgoing the capabilities and creativity of the public at large, who can make the results of participatory governance more beneficial than those obtained by relying only on the work of the bureaucracy and technocracy.

Every country's pathway to greater participation of the public in its own affairs, which is mandatory in the 21st century when we no longer have the *hoi polloi* of ancient Greece nor 'the masses' of 19th and 20th century legend, will be different. A century of investment in human resource development, improving educational opportunities and health as well as connecting people mentally (and electronically) to a wider world, has created a different and unprecedented

political and technical environment. Thus, the Chinese government is having to figure out, along with its citizens, how the legacy of past millennia and past decades can be reworked to achieve a productive continuity with the past at a time when a genuinely new China is coming into being.

The case studies in this volume take a direct look at the strategies and difficulties associated with 'midwifing' this transition, starting necessarily on smaller scales with the anticipation of larger-scale changes and accomplishments to come. The real agents of change are the personnel 'on the ground' who are dealing with communities, officials, technicians and others to make the adjustments needed in thinking and practice to give local people both a greater voice and a greater hand in the development process and in regulations. Donor agencies are also very evident and important in these efforts, making positive and negative contributions just as the local actors make varied contributions for better or worse. The end result of all these efforts and interactions is not yet known or foreseeable. But the forces of history are certainly moving China, like other countries, in the direction of more participatory governance and management.

An understanding of the processes, micro and macro but particularly micro, that move such social and political change along is important for facilitating their further progress. A concept like 'farmer-centred research and extension', for example, is quite radical in a society where education and expertise have been the property, indeed monopoly, of an educated class for millennia. It is, in fact, consistent with the ideals and objectives of the revolution made more than 50 years ago. This political fact does not, however, make participatory approaches to research and extension automatically part of the thinking and practice of either the agricultural researchers and technicians or of the farmers who are expected to adopt the outputs of institutionalized research processes. Establishing different relationships between users and generators of technology involves psychological and cultural as well as institutional changes, especially when the new doctrine would make the users *co*-generators of technology, regarding them as adapters rather than as adopters.

Similarly, although most of China's forest resources have been under the de facto control of communities from time immemorial, the right of the state to regulate forest use and to pre-empt local rights has been long-standing. This has created an adversarial relationship that, under more participatory regimes of natural resource management, needs to become a partnership. This transformation of social relations and reassignment of responsibility is a complex one in which capacity as well as willingness at local levels to manage forest resources sustainably cannot be assumed. Chapters 5 and 6 address difficulties and advances in this domain. One would think that a function like irrigation management, which Chinese farmers have done for thousands of years, would be an easier domain in which to institutionalize participation but, as seen in Chapter 9, formalizing and handing over authority for management can be a protracted process.

In all these cases, the dominant role of the central government and the critical roles of local government bodies are evident. Participation is not a matter of handing over authority but rather of refashioning and reshaping social as well as political relationships. These are human processes more than legal ones. Unfortunately, stereotyped concepts of 'power' often get in the way, as 'giving up'

power is seldom an attractive proposition. This view of power in zero-sum terms is, fortunately, a matter of definition and concept, since power can equally be regarded and exercised in positive-sum terms, where there are win-win possibilities and gains for one party do not necessarily come at the expense of others' losses.[2] Power can be framed as a matter of 'power over …' which is a static way of thinking, locked into win–lose balances; or it can be understood as 'power to…' in which case one must address the purposes for which power exists, taking more of a societal perspective than a personal one, and seeking win-win outcomes.

When the Rural Development Committee at Cornell University 30 years ago looked at rural local institutions across Asia, from China to Yugoslavia (16 cases were studied), we found that those countries which had the most developed frameworks of local organization (multiple channels as well as multiple tiers) had the best performance over the previous two decades in terms of a variety of economic and social measures of development.[3] The question of power and its devolution came up in the analysis, of course, and the zero-sum concept had to be considered.

Our conclusion was that expanding the power of local institutions, with participation as part of their mode of operation, would be zero-sum *only when and to the extent* that decision-makers at the centre did not want for communities at the periphery what those communities want for themselves. (To be sure, this is taking a 'power to…' perspective.) In fact, from such a vantage point, the more that local communities are empowered to achieve their priorities, the more 'power' the centre has to achieve its goals – assuming that it wants communities to be better able to satisfy their needs and wants more fully. If the centre has different objectives than those of the people it is governing, then there will be a loss of 'power' when communities have more ability and right to make decisions and take initiatives on their own. But that loss is a consequence of *conflicting or divergent objectives*; it is not a loss of power in any absolute sense.

The evolution of participatory approaches in China will require much experimentation, evaluation and 'sorting out' in the years to come. The central issue should not be who gains power and who loses it, but rather, power for *what* purposes, and for *whose* purposes? The Chinese state will continue to be the main actor in this process. Donor agencies, NGOs and communities will be more numerous but will be taking initiatives rather than determining the shape of relationships to come. As in other countries, there will be a groping toward establishing something that functions like a partnership and eventually becomes one, suiting the economic, political, cultural and historical conditions of China as these continue to evolve. However, participatory initiatives will become increasingly a dimension of the conditions and forces that create this future.

Notes

1 This point is developed in Wilkes, 2003, p211.
2 For an analytical treatment of 'power' making such relationships clearer, see Uphoff, 1989.
3 See Esman and Uphoff, 1974.

Preface

Janelle Plummer and John G Taylor

The debate over participation is becoming increasingly influential in China's development agenda. Some would argue that the take-up of participatory methodologies by the government's Leading Group for Poverty Alleviation has heralded a new era. But what characterizes participation in China and what are the primary influences over its development? If participation is brought into mainstream poverty reduction policy in the near future, what are the constraints on its replication and how will the local levels of government develop the capacity to ensure that villagers are involved in participatory processes in a meaningful way? This book documents a range of issues and experiences regarding participation in the context of China and through both synthetic chapters and detailed case studies focuses on the local-level challenges of developing capacity for community participation.

The research leading to this publication grew out of (and has been informed by) a number of projects being undertaken for the Department for International Development (DFID) in 1999–2000. The research and publication of a sourcebook for local government on community participation set out a framework for the capacity building of local organizations and staff. This was directed primarily at the context of South Asia but proved useful in other developing countries struggling with the institutionalization of participatory processes in the context of decentralization. At the same time, our involvement in the project preparation for the DFID-funded Yunnan Environmental Development Programme led to many questions about the capacity of local townships and administrative villages to implement the challenging participatory methodologies envisaged by DFID in the quest to strengthen the capacity of the provincial government to implement pro-poor environmental programmes. It led to a keen interest in what community participation was and could be in the ever-changing context of contemporary China; and in a context where the implementing agency would be resource-deficient local government.

Although there is a great deal of experience and knowledge of participation and the role of the poor in poverty and environmental programmes amongst Chinese researchers and development practitioners, our experience of DFID project preparation and review was that this was not easily accessible to English-speaking practitioners and donor representatives. Furthermore, the lessons of the multitude of donor-funded participatory projects remained largely unpublished and had not yet been synthesized to inform the development of new projects. The identification of these gaps was further supported by a genuine interest, among those involved in participatory projects, in the provision of new capacity-building materials; it was this interest that ultimately led us to work towards the present publication.

Editors' Acknowledgements

The research, publication and dissemination stages have been funded by the DFID China Programme and the DFID Knowledge and Research Programme. We are grateful to Sushila Zeitlyn, Senior Social Development Adviser at DFID for her interest and for facilitating this funding at the outset – without that commitment, this work would not have been possible. A large number of people have contributed to the various stages leading to this publication: the individual contributions provided through the case studies and participation in workshops are the core of the material provided here. We would like to acknowledge all the participants of the first workshop held in Kunming in December 2001, including Li Xiaoyun, Liu Jinlong, Shen Hong, Jillian Popkins, Gan Tingyu, Zuo Ting, Han Wei, Chen Shaojun, Shi Guoqing, Zhou Pidong, Zhang Hanmei, Ren Xiaodong, Xu Jiaqi, Gu Xuebin, Cai Kui, Lai Qingkui, Zhang Lanying, Lu Xin, Du Juan, Zhao Yaqiao, Zheng Baohua, Su Yufang, Lu Caizhen, Bettina Gransow and Frank Sandvoss.

The fieldwork for many of the cases contained in this book was conducted between January and September 2002, by teams from Beijing, Kunming and Nanjing. Our thanks go to all the team members' groups for their respective contributions to the cases as well as to the final authors (and translators) of the chapters. For Group One these included: Liu Jinlong (Coordinator), Chinese Academy of Forestry (CAF), Zhou Pidong and Yuan Juanwen, Guizhou Academy of Agricultural Sciences; Wu Junqi; Zhang Mingxin, Nanjing Forestry University; Jiang Chunqian, Chinese Academy of Forestry; and Zuo Ting, Centre for Integrated Agriculture Development (CIAD), China Agricultural University. In Group Two, the Coordinator, Zhao Yaqiao from the Centre for Community Development Studies (CDS) was supported by Ren Xiaodong, Guizhou Normal University; Su Yufang, CDS; Ma Ji, Yunnan Academy of Social Sciences; and Xu Wei, Sichuan Academy of Social Sciences. Group Three was coordinated by

Zhang Lanying of the Centre for Indigenous Knowledge and Biodiversity (CIKB), Kunming. Group Four was coordinated by Li Xiaoyun, Dean, College of Humanities and Development, China Agricultural University, Beijing, with Cai Kui, Yunnan Institute of Geography; Du Juan, Yunnan Academy of Social Sciences; and Xu Jiaqi, Huoshan Sino-Dutch Project. Group Five was coordinated by Chen Shaojun, National Resettlement Research Center (NRCR), Hohai University, Nanjing, and included Shi Guoqing, Zhu Wenlong and Xu Jiajun, all from the NRCR, Hohai University, Nanjing.

We would also like to thank all those who attended the synthesis workshop held in Beijing in October 2002. This was a very productive event that provided a great deal of the material contained in this book. Participants included Hein Mallee, Jillian Popkins, Robyn Wexler and James Whittle; Li Xiaoyun, Liu Yonggong, Li Ou, Wang Dehai, Zhou Xuejun, Wang Libin and Tang Lixia from CIAD; Chen Shaojun, Shi Guoqing, Xu Jiajun and Zhu Wenlong from NRCR; Yuan Juanwen from Guizhou Academy of Agricultural Sciences; Zhao Yaqiao and Su Yufang from CDS; Cai Kui, Yin Chengzhi, Wang Shihao and Li Liya. Thanks also to Liu Jinlong for useful follow-up discussions.

In addition to the teams contributing case study chapters we would particularly like to thank our colleagues Andrew Preston, GHK International, who assisted in coordination and management; Joe Remenyi for his work and thought on capacity building; Li Ou, Tim Zachernuk and Han Yong for their voluntary contribution on participatory irrigation management (PIM) and for being so helpful throughout the process; and Li Xiaoyun for his continuing interest and support. We would also like to thank all those who provided comments, including Jillian Popkins (DFID) and Hein Mallee (Ford Foundation) for reviewing the case study chapters and the final manuscript.

Finally, our thanks go to Frances MacDermott and Jonathan Sinclair Wilson at Earthscan and to the outside editorial team for their tremendous support in the production process.

Many argue that much donor energy in China has been spent on reinventing the wheel – such is the sectoral nature of poverty alleviation in China. We hope this work will promote greater convergence amongst donors in participatory initiatives by providing a state-of-play summary and a focus on the capacity building needed if participation is to evolve and take hold in future development initiatives.

Acronyms and Abbreviations

ABC	Agricultural Bank of China
ACFTU	All-China Federation of Trade Unions
ACWF	All-China Women's Federation
ADB	Asian Development Bank
AusAID	Australian Aid Agency
BoC	Bank of China
CAU	China Agricultural University
CBG	capacity-building group
CBO	community-based organization
CDP	county development plan
CDS	(Centre for) Community Development Studies
CFA	community forestry assessment
CHINARR	The Collaborative Hengxian Integrated Approach to Rural Reconstruction
CIAD	Centre for Integrated Agricultural Development
CIKB	Centre for Indigenous Knowledge and Biodiversity
CNNR	Cao Hai National Nature Reserve
CNPAP	China–Netherlands Poverty Alleviation Project
CPAP	County Poverty Alleviation Planning
CPC	county planning commission
CPO	county/banner project office
CTF	Community Trust Fund
DFID	Department for International Development (UK)
EE	environmental education
EPB	environmental protection bureau
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
FFS	farmer field schools

GDP	gross domestic product
GEF	Global Environmental Facility
GoC	Government of China
GTZ	German Agency for Technical Cooperation
ha	hectares
ICF	International Crane Foundation
IEC	information, education and communication
IIRR	integrated approach to rural reconstruction
INBAR	International Network for Bamboo and Rattan
IPM	integrated pest management
IRDC	Integrated Rural Development Centre
KfW	Kreditanstalt für Wiederaufbau (German Development Bank)
KWCs	key working poor counties
LGOP	Leading Group Office for Poverty Alleviation and Economic Development in Backward Areas
mu	1 *mu* = 0.667 hectares
NFPP	Natural Forest Protection Programme
NGO	non-governmental organization
NPC	National People's Congress
NRCR	National Research Centre for Resettlement
NRM	natural resource management
NTFPs	non-timber forest products
O&M	operation and maintenance
PA	participatory appraisal
PADOs	poverty alleviation and development offices
PAR	participatory action research
PCMB	Piyuan Canal management bureau
PCRP	Piyuan Canal Rehabilitation Project
PEA	project executing agency
PIM	participatory irrigation management
PLUP	participatory land-use planning
PMC	project management centre
PME	participatory monitoring and evaluation
PMO	project management office
PMU	project management unit
PPA	participatory poverty alleviation
PPI	participatory poverty index
PPO	provincial project office
PRA	participatory rural appraisal
PRC	People's Republic of China
RAP	resettlement action plan
RCCs	rural credit cooperatives
RDRC	Rural Development and Research Centre
RMB	renminbi (yuan): 1 renminbi/yuan = US$8.26 (August 2003)
RRA	rapid rural appraisal
SASS	Sichuan Academy of Social Sciences
SDPC	State Development Planning Commission

SEDC	State Education Commission
SEPA	State Environmental Protection Agency
SFA	State Forestry Administration
SIDD	self-financing irrigation and drainage district
SWM	solid waste management
SWOT	strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats
TA	technical assistance
TFS	township forestry station
TOT	training of trainers
TUP	Trickle-Up Programme
TVEs	township and village enterprises
UNCED	United Nations Conference on Environment and Development
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
US$	United States dollar
VBCP	Village Branch of Chinese Communist Party Committee
VC	village committee
VG	village group
VPG	village planning group
VPLs	village poverty lines
VPR	village poverty reduction
VPRG	village poverty reduction groups
VRA	village representative assembly
VRGs	village reference groups
WSCs	water supply corporations
WUA	water user association
WUG	water user group
WWF	Worldwide Fund for Nature
YASS	Yunnan Academy of Social Sciences
¥	Yuan (renminbi): 1 yuan/renminbi = US$8.26 (August 2003)
ZOPP	*Zielorientierte Projektplanung* (objectives-oriented project planning)

1
Introduction

Janelle Plummer[1]

The concept of community participation in development has spread to all regions of the world. Applied in Latin America since the early 1960s, replicated throughout South Asia in rural and urban development and applied to varying degrees in the African subcontinent, the experience of participatory processes have provided a vast number of lessons, and revealed many constraints on effective implementation. The literature shows that the participatory approach to development has taken a different turn with each context, with each people, culture and background. Unsurprisingly, then, in the global analysis, community participation is not singular but plural; it is not a simple, linear set of replicable rules but an approach constantly adapting to a complex combination of political, economic, institutional and cultural forces.

The wave of community participation in development reached China in the late 1980s.[2] In terms of history, politics and economic policy, the context in which the approach was to be implemented varied considerably from other situations – just as each of these, in turn, offered a unique experience.[3] For instance, Brazil, like many Latin American countries in the late 1980s, saw the development of widespread democracy but not the economic transformation necessary to integrate the poor into economic life.[4] The development of participatory processes in the development and reconstruction of post-apartheid South Africa in the early 1990s was markedly different again: there, with little external donor influence, participatory approaches arose from a political freedom movement amongst non-governmental organizations (NGOs), was enshrined in the constitution and emerging legislation and became institutionalized through the most rigorous procedural channels.

For those introducing this participatory approach into China, the common agenda with other places was an intention to shift the development paradigm, to promote a people-centred approach that prioritized demand over supply

mechanisms, was inclusive of poor communities, and created a role for them in their own development. In each context, an inherent goal was to change the concept of 'beneficiary' to 'participant'. On the other hand, the differences in China stemmed from a unique relationship between the people and the state, the specificities of a centralized system of government, and the burden of a history in which collective action and mobilization were characteristic, but in a vastly different form and context to the goals and aspirations of the participatory movement elsewhere.

Yet many of the changes taking place in China in the post-1978 era created a context that enabled participatory initiatives to be launched on a pilot scale and to be explored in rural development in conceptual and practical terms. In particular, the far-reaching reforms that resulted in the decollectivization of agriculture and the establishment of the household production system meant that the household replaced the former production team as the basic unit of the rural economy. The breakdown in the controls of village government that came in the wake of this transition eventually created an opportunity for change at the lowest levels of government. Indeed the installation of village-level elections that occurred in the late 1980s represented a fundamental shift towards the role of people in making choices about matters that affect their livelihoods.[5]

This scenario enabled a portfolio of community-based projects to develop. They were scattered and relatively small in scale, but they were also strongly supported, even dominated, by the teams responsible for their implementation. It could be argued that each project functioned in a cocoon, within a relatively self-contained operating environment. The authorities knew where the cocoons were, but on the macro scale the country was focused on reducing poverty through rapid economic growth. These initiatives were, at that time, little projects of a paternalistic donor community. The real business was the progress being made economically, and the annual growth statistics proved it.

International development agencies therefore played a critical role in promoting the development of participatory approaches in China – as elsewhere.[6] Looking back, local participation experts suggest that these early efforts were too generic and perhaps evangelical, and in many respects not adequately adapted to the local situations in which they were being applied. The factors impeding the processes were numerous. Although they were approved, the level of agreement and commitment at the national level was ambiguous. Despite instructions to engage in the participatory elements of internationally funded projects, the capacity, skill and commitment to community participation increasingly diminished at the lower levels of government – just where the projects were implemented.[7] The marginal nature of these projects and their divergence from mainstream departmental activities meant that government officials involved in the implementation were (whether simultaneously or sequentially) expected to manage two diametrically opposed roles: the top-down, instruction-driven approach of their 'real jobs', and the bottom-up, participatory methodologies characteristic of the donor-funded projects in which they may have been involved. Capacity development for community participation was slow – and remains slow – because there is little incentive for government officials to engage in the goals of participatory approaches.

While the approach did not mushroom, it developed on a project-by-project, sector-by-sector basis, chipping away with the support of international funding in the fields of rural development, environmental management, water resource management and forestry. It covered a broad range of activities but always at the micro level. The level of external support for some small endeavours was extremely high and the tenacity of donors to succeed was marked. While it produced sceptics and opponents in this first decade of its implementation, participation was not conducted on a scale that brought any significant signs of nervousness – or interest – from key policy-makers.[8] But it did produce new community-based models and these efforts now provide a sound foundation for future poverty targeting.

By the mid-1990s, however, the impacts of economic reform became visible. Despite change on an unprecedented scale – the reduction of the number of people living in poverty from approximately 260 million in 1978 to 32 million in 2000[9] – it also became clear that these rates of poverty reduction could not be maintained and that many of China's poor were being marginalized from these benefits. Endemic poverty still existed in the southwest and western provinces. At the sectoral level, the particularities of forestry, agriculture and water resources also led to the need for more engagement with farmers and villagers if specific sectoral goals were to be reached. By 2000, a new interest in targeting (and methodologies which produced targeted results) had arisen at the national level, notably in the Leading Group Office for Poverty Alleviation and Economic Development in Backward Areas (LGOP), and the previous decade of donor tinkering with participatory approaches in the Chinese context found a new relevance and take-up. Notably, too, it seems that the development of institutional capacity to assist with the development of participation (in 'resource centres' such as the Centre for Integrated Agricultural Development (CIAD) and the participatory rural appraisal (PRA) network discussed in the following section) is now likely to support government initiatives.

The Development of Participatory Initiatives in China

The launch of participation in donor projects[10]

When participation was introduced in China at the end of the 1980s, and applied in the field of development at the beginning of the 1990s, it was subject to the controls on most international agencies and was inevitably located in two centres. In Beijing, the Germany Agency for Technical Cooperation (GTZ) supported CIAD as a project at the China Agricultural University, which had begun to introduce several new concepts – participation, gender and indigenous knowledge – into their pedagogy and fieldwork by the end of the 1980s. In 1989, CIAD set up more than ten field research areas in Hebei Province of China to incorporate the participatory approach into applied agricultural research and development. In order to draw on the wealth of knowledge and experience of the farmers, the project encouraged them to participate in the development of technologies for grain and animal production. This application of participatory

methods marked a change in the (agricultural) research and development approach used in China. The success of the Hebei project resulted in the establishment of CIAD and the College of Rural Development at the China Agricultural University. Throughout the 1990s, CIAD has promoted participation through both formal and informal training programmes and applied research activities.

Alongside the CIAD project, from the late 1980s the Ford Foundation supported participatory approaches by researchers and practitioners in a group of institutions based in Kunming. These included the Yunnan Institute of Geography and the Yunnan Academy of Social Sciences (including the Centre for Community Development Studies),[11] which all played leading roles in developing participatory approaches in the 1990s. Anchored by these institutions, an extensive PRA network developed in southwest China, extending into the neighbouring provinces of Guangxi and Guizhou. A primary contribution of these academic centres and government NGOs to the participatory agenda was an understanding of ethnicity, gender and the linkages to environmental protection. As a result they have been central to the development of a large number of projects and much of the indigenization of participatory thought in China.

The Ford Foundation's[12] work in the early 1990s focused on supporting a number of young scientists to apply the participatory approach in the fields of poverty alleviation, social forestry, biodiversification, health and community development. The support also focused on building the capacity of individuals through its overseas training programme and in-country training activities. Building on training programmes that took place between 1988 and 1992 (in data gathering, community-based poverty analysis, project monitoring, impact assessment and evaluation), in 1993 the Foundation invited Robert Chambers to conduct the first PRA training in Beijing. Most of the participants in these training programmes are now actively applying a participatory approach in their work. The Ford Foundation also funded the PRA network in southwest China, now nationally recognized for its capacity in undertaking participatory activities.

A number of other initiatives provided a springboard for the spread of participatory strategies in rural development. In 1993, GTZ launched the Sino-German Mountain, River and Lake Development Programme in Jiangxi Province. The programme applied an integrated approach and strongly emphasized community participation. Simultaneously, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) introduced participatory approaches in its projects, particularly in its micro-finance activities. Throughout the 1990s, prominent international donors – including international NGOs such as Oxfam and the Worldwide Fund for Nature (WWF), as well as the World Bank, the Asian Development Bank (ADB) and the UK's Department for International Development (DFID) – promoted participatory approaches in development initiatives in China.[13]

Throughout this process, a major constraint has been the chronic lack of capacity at all levels of government, but this is pronounced at the local level – at the interface with communities. In recognition of this, most bilateral funded projects have included capacity building for staff and communities to some

degree. This capacity building occurred within project cocoons, perhaps with influential stakeholders at the margins, but nevertheless closely restricted to those involved in the project. Dissemination of the participatory approach has thus been limited to those areas benefiting from specific project activities. Outside this zone, participation remains undeveloped and untested.

Addressing poverty through participatory approaches

To date, participatory methods have been used in many academic and research institutes in China. For example, in the recently established Farmer-Centred Research Network, which aims to further participatory work in farmer technology and management, there are twenty members from major institutes in nine provinces. Participatory management and monitoring have played a substantial part in the reform of the forestry and natural resource management sectors in recent years. Participatory methods and techniques have played a similar role in the development of farmer-based technology and management methods. They are playing an important role in poverty reduction and the management of poverty reduction funds, and are becoming important in the delivery of health, education, and environmental services and management. Participation is also emerging in policy areas where previously it has been largely absent, notably in resettlement, as evidenced in the work of the National Research Centre for Resettlement at Hohai University, Nanjing.

Despite the increasing commitment to community participation in development by international donors,[14] participatory approaches have only recently received significant attention from Chinese government agencies. In 2000, the World Bank, the ADB and the UNDP joined with the LGOP to review the performance of China's poverty alleviation programme over the last five years. The study found that although the programme had assisted in drastically reducing absolute poverty, its efficiency and effectiveness need to be addressed, especially the leakage of poverty reduction resources.

In 2001, following consultations with Chinese participatory academics, the State Council accepted a recommendation from the LGOP to adopt a new national poverty alleviation strategy to refocus national efforts on endemic village poverty. In a major shift of approach, the strategy emphasized the participatory process and gender awareness; it also envisaged a role for NGOs. The rhetoric sounded promising, and subsequently steps were taken to implement a village-based poverty reduction programme.[15] Although current efforts are encouraging, considerable work still needs to be undertaken to integrate participatory approaches into rural development practices. Capacity for the development of participation and an understanding of the poor are prerequisites for the successful implementation of the participatory approach. The process thus far has involved the participation of international donors such as the ADB, UNDP, DFID, AusAID and the LGOP. The State Development Planning Commission (SDPC), the Ministry of Finance and the Agricultural Bank of China (ABC) have also participated, but not as actively as may be needed for sustainable and balanced outcomes.[16] Supported by the ADB and UNDP, a methodology for county poverty alleviation planning has been

developed, followed by training on how to apply the methodology at different administrative levels.[17]

How is Community Participation Different?

Many argue that community participation in China is very different from community participation found elsewhere. As the purpose of this book is to promote greater understanding of participation in China, it is important to enter this discussion and to reflect on how it is – or might be – different and why. To argue that it is different because of historical, political and cultural constraints is valid in itself, but understanding exactly what this means in terms of content, process and outcome is also essential. The assertion of uniqueness needs to be backed up with information and clarification to support the argument for cultural specificity. Improved understanding of the micro-processes involved in establishing participatory initiatives is essential for more effective donor interventions – whether at project level or in capacity building at the central level of government.

The case studies produced for this book examine a number of the key participatory initiatives that have taken place in China during the last decade. They have been authored by groups of academics and consultants committed to participation – those who are constantly called upon to provide assistance to donors in the development, implementation and evaluation of participatory projects. Reading these case studies, however, it is difficult to reach a definitive conclusion on how participation in China is different from elsewhere. The discussions include concepts and arguments found in many other countries, and the content is not sufficiently comparative to give us a relative viewpoint.

So what is different about the development of community participation in China?[18] Needless to say, a primary difference in the operating context and the background to participatory initiatives is that, unlike most other states recently embarking on participatory processes, economic reform has preceded socio-political reform in China, and economic rights are prioritized over social and human rights. This places the participatory activity – which is fundamentally concerned with inclusion and social equity – on a different footing.

It is also notable that many of the issues that differentiate the Chinese context are institutional. One of the most obvious for development agencies and practitioners accustomed to working in quasi-democratic environments (with a process originating in such an environment) is the relative unfamiliarity and greater unpredictability of the participatory process. Central to this is not notions of democracy – which may be questionable elsewhere, in any case – but the mechanics of the centralized system in a country the size of China. The sheer scale of a top-down apparatus attempting to reach 1.2 billion people must bring with it some unique features. The significant size, nature and presence of the government/Party system in all aspects of society create a background – and a foreground – to the implementation process. However, size has also enabled the government of China to recognize that it can experiment with new ideas in critical areas before it has to commit to national outreach. The pervasiveness of the state in the lives of the Chinese people is manifest in a range of ways, some

active, some passive. But what is also crucial is that the composition of this canvas has been changing now for decades and the interaction with the participatory ethos is in a constant state of flux.

A consequence of the scale and nature of the system governing the Chinese people is that there is significant distance between the central government that formulates and delivers policy and the village where it is implemented. The directives and instructions handed down through a long chain of command from central government – be they concerned with tight controls over agricultural production or innovative methods of involving farmers – are passed from one level of the government hierarchy to the next and inevitably lose some of their meaning and focus en route. In practice, local levels of government actually exhibit a high degree of autonomy, a quasi-decentralized status brought about only through distance and size. This is often manifest in the way policy is interpreted.

Adherence to top-down policy and directives, together with the constraints of scale and administrative separation, have required the development of strict reporting systems to monitor achievements. All officials are familiar with the targets set for them and cognizant that their personal and administrative performances are judged by their success in meeting these (quantitative) targets. This has produced a system strictly geared towards inputs and outputs (eg, number of trees planted and amount of grain produced) and a dedication to upward reporting. One of the consequences of this, noted both in the case studies and by project counterparts, is a tendency on the part of the lower levels of government to adopt formalistic approaches to their work, focusing on achieving paper targets and sidestepping thorny implementation issues.

Long chains of command, formalistic approaches at the local level and the target-driven approach to implementing policy are not the only constraints on the top-down method through which participation is introduced. From an institutional perspective, development activities arise from a strict planning mechanism. At the national level, the policy directives used by the LGOP are limited in their effect without the implicit agreement of three key organizations: the Finance Ministry, the Agriculture Bank of China and the Planning Commission. At the county level, the poverty alleviation office can be a junior player in the scheme of things, with few resources to call its own and very little capacity to coordinate actions of other players. County-level officials and their line department counterparts are subject to frequent policy directives from above, ranging from tax collection to family planning and the directives of the 16th Party Congress. Understandably they prioritize the directives from the significant central agencies such as the Party Office, the Finance Ministry and the line departments. At the level of local government, line agencies and technical bureaux are simultaneously part of a vertical chain of command (through the provincial bureau to the central ministry) and also very much part of the local administration (in which the county Party secretary and county magistrate are the authorities). In the day-to-day operations, requirements determined by local budget allocations tend to take precedence and as such this local-level leadership is a fulcrum to bring about behavioural change, irrespective of the concurrent efforts of the county LGOP.

A fundamental concern is also raised by both individual and institutional attitudes towards the poor.[19] In China, as elsewhere, unfavourable attitudes towards the poor and scepticism about the value of their participation are widespread. This makes officials quite wary of getting involved. The Chinese official displays significant risk aversion, and is far more likely to opt for the no-risk route than to embark on an approach that may affect his/her promotion and office. While this may be a universal phenomenon, it is particularly noticeable in China because of the extensive powers of the bureaucracy. The result is that innovations that are clearly and forcefully championed by important authorities can evoke significant changes almost overnight, while innovations that are not so clearly championed – illustrated perhaps by those promoting the involvement of poor farmers in development processes that have always been top-down – can meet with resistance even if the enabling environment has been created.

One of the areas where one can find immediate similarities with the way community participation has developed elsewhere is the chronic lack of capacity at the implementation level and the lack of commitment to building that capacity.[20] This is exacerbated by the lack of incentives described earlier in this chapter. But whereas elsewhere participatory processes emerge from partnerships formed in civil society – partnerships that build on a diversity of relationships and benefit from non-governmental demonstration projects – in China, the partner is invariably the government and the interface role is restricted to government officials (supported by donor organizations). As such the process through which the participatory approach has evolved has always involved government and has been unable to escape the lack of capacity at the local level.

Lack of local government capacity for participation (developed in detail in Chapter 11 of this book) is prevalent elsewhere; it is not China-specific and the capacity gaps identified are not significantly different. Persistent under-capacity at the local level to implement policies formulated by higher levels of government and donors is characteristic of all countries, without exception. These capacity deficiencies are exacerbated in the context of China by the disincentives for officials to take up non-mainstream thinking and techniques such as the output- (rather than outcome-) driven performance evaluation and the aversion to risk mentioned previously.

It also remains the case that much of the community participation developed and implemented in contemporary China is directed by county, township and village leaders and is influenced disproportionately by élite village groups. Given that the locus of political power in most villages lies with the village committee, the village assembly, and the village Party branch (headed by the Party secretary), the members of these organizations exercise substantial power and are able to strongly influence both the forms and development of participation. Many also show they may not yet be willing to share decision-making over the allocation of resources. Frequently, the power to influence participation is also exercised by groups such as owners of successful rural enterprises, wealthier farmers and social organizations established to deliver services and welfare. In the current conditions, where participation is introduced from above, the influence of these groups can be substantial. But is this fundamentally different from the influence of élites elsewhere?

An important distinction seems to be the ambiguity or lack of clarity at village level as to who is community and who is government. The practice of paying village officials means that they are, on one hand, government employees, but, on the other hand, representatives of the people. The instigation of village elections has not changed this. Accountability is confused. This is vastly different from the Indian context, for instance, where local politicians may facilitate participatory initiatives, but do so through the development of community-based organizations (CBOs). In India there is a clear distinction between the government and people, and little confusion as to the sense of duty and accountability. What is similar, of course, is the dominance within communities of powerful members over the more vulnerable, and the lack of representativeness of community organizations. But whereas, in typical democratic contexts, leaders are either these élite individuals (often seeking personal gain) or community activists (promoting participation from below), in China many community leaders are also government representatives with the authority to exercise control over other villagers' actions. Needless to say, this authoritarian relationship does little to inspire the development of meaningful forms of participation.

Within the context of China, the rhetoric of participation is accompanied by a set of historical and political references that affect community perceptions. In order to understand the implications of the term 'participation' in China today one must set the term within the confines of China's history. Historically, there has been a significant role for communities in China, especially in the Maoist period. This involvement was largely centred on providing labour to collective production. Mass participation 'has been a distinctive feature of the Chinese political scene'[21] and brings with it enormous historical significance. In situations where communities and officials are unfamiliar with the types of participation envisaged, involuntary labour and cost sharing are typical expectations. The process of establishing community trust is thus dependent on first removing historical associations and preconceptions from the minds of hesitant farmers accustomed only to involuntary community contributions and directives requiring them to provide labour.

Participation also usually entails some form of community–government partnership and 'working together' is a key characteristic of that partnership, at the very least through meetings and committees and through formal CBOs. But for many Chinese farmers the idea of working together is associated with the days of the collective economy. Participation thus requires consciousness raising to get people to abandon the idea of working together in the sense of a cooperative/commune that managed every facet of their lives. It requires farmers to take up and accept the idea that working together in the pursuit of a specific aim can bring benefits not gained by working individually. Farmers still jealously guard the rights they have acquired under the household responsibility system. Evidence from a range of projects suggests that they are very wary of taking up other methods that require 'grouping' again, or look as though they might jeopardize the individual control accorded them through these rights.

These types of 'passive' involvement[22] – people doing what they are told – must be utterly transformed to 'active' and committed involvement if community participation is to become a meaningful concept in China. This is a different

starting point to those socio-political situations where the poor have had limited interaction with government and little experience of participating in government projects. This transformation is extremely problematic. Removing the constraints and addressing the factors and processes affecting participation (described in Chapter 4) is not straightforward. These factors all interact and accumulate. In particular the 'passivity' and reliance of the farmers on government is ever-present and is accentuated by low levels of education and a limited awareness of the world beyond their own local community. This tendency appears to become stronger with distance – the more remote (and poor) the area, the greater the propensity for passivity and reliance. This reliance, however, is not necessarily associated with trust (in many cases there is deep-rooted scepticism), and does not make for better partnerships with local government.

Complementing and reinforcing the attitudes of village, township and county government officials is a traditional Chinese respect for authority. Farmers expect to defer to the views and will of those representing the state. The nature of their relationships with authority has a marked effect on how they converse with officials and the terms of their involvement in participatory initiatives. The flip side is that officials expect this deference and find it hard to renegotiate these relationships.

In order to investigate specific aspects of community participation in China it is necessary to consider in detail the objectives and forms of community participation in China (Chapter 3) as well as the constraints on and enabling processes of community participation. It is hoped that Chapters 3 and 4 will throw more light on this comparative discussion.

Promoting Capacity for Participation in China

Objectives

This book has a number of objectives. The first is to present the current state of play on community participation in China. After almost two decades of developing participatory approaches in various parts of China, a large body of information is now available on participatory projects targeting the poor. While there is significant knowledge in and around the topic of community participation in the Chinese context, it is agreed that it would be useful to present this for wider dissemination. That is not to say that much of this material is not available in some form. A number of Chinese texts have tackled the methodological aspects of participation,[23] and the reader is also directed towards works in English that address the development of local democracy in the past decades.[24]

The second objective is capacity building. By compiling this information in a structured way it is hoped that capacity-building organizations will be able to use it as a sourcebook of information and ideas. The development of capacity in relation to participation is a crucial aspect of replication and is required across a broad range of stakeholders from those supporting policy-making to implementation, from governance-related initiatives to specific project endeavours.

The third purpose of this book is to promote cross-learning. Synergy and convergence of sectors such as forestry, environmental protection and rural development currently involved in participatory processes occur informally in China but documentation tends to be specific and sectoral. The book therefore brings together principles, challenges and illustrations from a range of sectors, synthesizing this material under the broader agenda of poverty reduction. The sectoral nature of the experience of participation in China is a reflection of the institutional segregation apparent even to those least acquainted with the Chinese bureaucracy.

Target audience

The work intends to provide a contribution to development policy and practice, focusing on the poor and the need to establish sustainable mechanisms of poverty reduction. Published in English, this edition is intended to fill a gap in the current literature available to English-speaking international, governmental and non-governmental development agencies, practitioners, academics and students involved in the promotion of participation in China and, more specifically perhaps, in the development of capacity at the local level. Accordingly, the audience is one concerned with poverty reduction and sustainability, interested in the specific nature of participation in China and in taking forward the achievements of the last decade. It is therefore hoped that this work will contribute to the widening debate on participatory methods within Chinese government agencies and ministries.

Focus, scope and limitations

In order to meet the objectives already outlined, this book is limited in scope. First, the work is primarily, although not exclusively, concerned with implementation: what happens in the implementation of participatory projects and why it happens. This is not to question the fundamental importance of policy – indeed, the book emphasizes the key importance of a supportive policy environment – but simply to focus on the overwhelming problems, key issues and constraints that define implementation. In so doing, it responds to the difficulties of carrying forward new approaches and bringing about change.. It also juxtaposes encouraging policy at the centre with imperfect practice in the field, and considers the linkages between them.

The research phase of this project focused on environmental and rural development. In China, it is now accepted that the poorest groups live in areas marginalized from economic growth, often in remote, unstable environments where their livelihoods are inextricably linked to local conditions. The case studies leading to this publication are all from sectors closely related to this: natural resource management, forestry, water resources, integrated rural development and village planning in poor counties. The work does not look at participation in the context of social service sectors such as health and education, but the overriding focus and goal of this work is poverty reduction. Community participation is being considered primarily as a means to create sustainable

improvements in the livelihoods of the poor. While the work acknowledges the debate over democracy and human and socio-economic rights in China generally, the focus here is on the participation of the poor to improve the quality of their lives.

By extension, the work does not become concerned with the theoretical debate over the benefits of participation. It draws attention to the problems that arise in relation to participation – problems with gender discrimination and backlashes, problems with capture and manipulation, but it does so at a practical level and restricts its scope to the realities of implementing participatory projects.

Assumptions

The book has three primary assumptions: (1) that the participation of poor communities and households is beneficial; (2) that meaningful participation aims to increase decision-making in activities and processes that affect their livelihoods; and (3) that the inclusion of all groups in the community (women and other marginalized groups) is a foundation stone and a primary objective of the process.

Removing preconceptions and incorrect assumptions about participation remains a particular goal of the work. There are many perspectives on the potential of community participation in China. To many working in China for the first time, the very idea of formulating projects that embody a participatory approach seems a distant objective. There is little confidence that the demand-led development promoted elsewhere is possible. This attitude flows from an assumption that the centralized system permeates every aspect of every project. At the other extreme, however, some donors are rigid about the inclusion of participation of the poor, seeing it as a non-negotiable component and a condition of funding any development initiative. Armed with the knowledge of methodologies developed elsewhere, projects are developed with a participatory rhetoric and a generic set of objectives. The gap between perceptions and the objectives of stakeholders can be quite marked, especially when, in contrast, government officials still assume that the participation required is only concerned with mobilizing labour and community funding.

Structure and Content

This book is structured in three parts to provide readers with: (1) information on the basics of participation in China; (2) the evidence and on-the-ground experience of a range of sector-specific projects; and (3) the capacity issues involved in the development of participatory processes.

Part 1: Understanding community participation in China

Following this Introduction, Part 1 outlines the constituent elements of community participation and details issues affecting participatory processes in China. Chapter 2 explores the key dimensions of the historical and political conditions

determining the existence of participation and influencing its potential. It first examines the context for emerging participation in contemporary China by analysing the impact of social and political processes accompanying the post-1978 reforms. The chapter then describes the different mechanisms through which participation has been introduced and developed in China's rural sector in recent years.

Chapter 3 sets out the key elements of participation in order to construct a framework for developing greater understanding of what participation is and could be in China. First it explores the objectives of participation in relation to key stakeholders, highlighting the differing objectives of each. It then considers the potential forms of participation in China, noting that the participation ladder developed by Chinese academics and practioners starts with small, distinct steps. The discussion next examines the opportunities for participation: through the use of case study data, juxtaposing the forms of participation achieved in the various stages of the project cycle, it illustrates how the practice of implementing participatory approaches can result in very different community roles.

Chapter 4 explores the processes and factors affecting participation. It outlines these factors in terms of the external operating context, considering the political, legislative, administrative and economic factors that affect the participatory endeavour. It then looks at the community and individual factors that affect participation, including community organizations and leadership as well as ethnicity, gender, literacy and other characteristics. The chapter goes on to consider project-related factors and demonstrates how some 'participatory' projects, ironically enough, impose their own in-built constraints on the levels and forms of participation that can be achieved.

Part 2: The case studies[25]

The main case study chapters have been developed by a number of the key academics and practitioners working on participatory projects in China. They bring together and in some cases juxtapose the views and experiences of these local specialists working to promote participation in forestry, nature reserve management, irrigation, agriculture, rural development, resettlement and poverty alleviation planning. Each case study describes the operating context of the project, the objectives and processes involved, and the factors constraining the development of participation. Within the rural context, they reveal the range of experience in China today, the varying depth of this experience, the pockets of innovation, excellence and struggle, and the diversity of participatory initiatives in different sectors. The following profiles explain the focus and contribution of each case study.

The Sino-German Afforestation Project

The Sino-German Afforestation Project in Jiangxi, Hunan, Anhui and Inner Mongolia provinces commenced in 1994 with funding from KfW, the German development bank. The project aimed to improve land productivity, the livelihoods of the rural poor and the quality of the environment in selected regions; the focus was on desertification control, water and soil protection and

biodiversity protection. The purpose of villager participation in the project locations was to promote local people's ownership and motivation for change. Organized by the respective provincial forestry authorities, each project area covered 4–6 counties, with 50 townships and 500 villages. The case study presented in Chapter 5 focuses on the factors that affected participation throughout the project cycle, from the formulation of the project proposal to the participatory land-use planning (PLUP) technique established in the implementation period. It illustrates how participatory approaches and the procedures of PLUP were implemented under the prevailing conditions, in particular the top-down administration and extension systems in the forestry sector. Although the project is donor-driven and required substantial inputs from external consultants and intensive training of local project staff, the case illustrates the benefits of integrating participatory approaches into regional forestry development. A key finding is that factors external to the project (particularly the administrative, policy and legislative frameworks in the forestry sector) have considerable impact on outcomes. It suggests that an enabling framework for community participation in forestry management is essential and needs to be supplemented by efforts to enhance the local government's capacity to work effectively with communities.

The Forestry Development in Poor Areas Project, Jinping County, Guizhou

The World Bank-funded Forestry Development in Poor Areas Project (1998–2006) aims to promote sustainability and participation in the development of forest resources in poor areas of central and western China. The purpose is to support poverty reduction and forestry development, and to improve environmental management. Participation was incorporated in the project design to take account of villagers' views and, through the supported development of local forest resources, to attempt to meet the needs of those reliant on the forests for their livelihoods. The scale of the project differentiates it from other cases. It covers 5043 villages in 197 counties and 12 provinces, including Guizhou where this specific case study was carried out. The case of Jinping County focuses on the factors affecting participation throughout the process and particularly on the community forestry assessment (CFA) approach. The CFA was largely donor-driven and its adoption by local forestry authorities was involuntary. Consequently, the application of the approach has been formalistic and it has not been successfully integrated into the project. The case study concludes that if community participation in forestry management is to be adopted successfully it requires much greater effort in capacity building (and financial support) for local project staff, together with considerable development in capacity within the Forestry Administration and revision of the policy and legislation that constrain further achievement within the forestry sector.

The Cao Hai Nature Reserve Management Project, Guizhou

Initiated in 1993, the Cao Hai project described in Chapter 6 focuses on building community capacity in an integrated cooperative project for community-based

conservation and development. Located in Cao Hai National Nature Reserve, Weining County, Guizhou Province, the project is organized by the Guizhou Environmental Protection Bureau and funded by the International Crane Foundation in association with the Trickle-Up Programme and the provincial government. The project sought to address the conflict created when the Reserve was established and the activities of local communities were restricted. It aimed to provide alternative livelihoods for poor farmers and to strengthen the self-organizing capacity of the local community. The project not only provides an illustration of how community participation can be used successfully in conflict resolution, but also does so in the complex and fragile setting of nature reserve management. A key finding is that whilst participation has facilitated agreement within the confines of the project agenda, negative external factors have not changed and continue to influence outcomes. More specifically, the case study is useful for those interested in community fund management and the dynamics of community capacity building.

The Qu County Participatory Forestry Resources Management Project, Sichuan

Managing existing forest resources is a key problem in Chinese forestry development. The focus is not only on planning new plantations, but on improving the existing ones and giving local people the authority to make decisions about the forest in which they live. The forestry resources project in Qu County, Sichuan, supported by the Ford Foundation's social forestry programme since 1994, focuses on participatory community management. The village – Cooperative Six – comprises 43 households. In September 1982, the cooperative divided forest land among the households; following a rise in illegal logging, however, the cooperative restored control to the collective. The project focused on improving the management of existing forest resources by harnessing the skills and interest of the local community. It attempted to improve community self-management, to increase the incomes generated by farmers from the forest (to reduce the conflict between protection and utilization of forest land), and to apply lessons learnt in this pilot to scale up the project to other areas of the county. The key objectives were to improve existing forest resources, to promote local people's participation in forest resource management, and to strengthen the capacity of the local community organization. The case illustrates the importance of process over results, and the difficulties in replicating the experience of a small pilot. Specific lessons of the Qu County experience include the constraints of an unsupportive policy environment and the problems arising when the external support agency intervention (in terms of policy, technology and funding) is overly dominant.

Local Initiative Participatory Forest Management Project in Da Maha, Yunnan

The Local Initiative Participatory Forest Management Project in Da Maha village, Gen Ma County, Yunnan, also described in Chapter 6, centres on a locally driven

project, established in 1995 and supported by the local township and county. The purpose of the project was to try to promote local people's participation in existing forest resource management by bringing out villagers' enthusiasm for sustainable forest management and utilization, especially to protect the forests and to strengthen the capacity of local community organizations. The project illustrates the mechanisms through which the participation of the local community developed during the project, from simple information sharing to cooperation and control. It also highlights the important link between indigenous knowledge and community participation. The indigenous people of Yunnan have lived in harmony with their environment for many generations, and have developed a range of methods for managing natural resources based on their own distinctive perceptions and sophisticated local knowledge. The project also provides a clear example of how the introduction of bottom-up approaches can conflict with conventional methods and government controls. It identifies the lack of local government capacity as the primary constraint on more extensive participation of communities in the management of nature reserves.

The Xiaolangdi resettlement project, Shanxi

The Xiaolangdi Dams Project described in Chapter 8 is a state 'eight five' key project. The submergence of the area affected five counties in Henan Province and three counties in Shanxi Province: 29 towns and 174 villages (188,000 people) were to be displaced by the infrastructure development and in 1994 their resettlement was funded with a World Bank loan of US$110 million. Resettlement covered the two areas affected by construction and the reservoir. The Xiaolangdi project provides an illustration of participation introduced within the limits of an involuntary resettlement project. The case study is intended to provide an understanding of the extent to which large infrastructure interventions in China can be undertaken with the involvement of those stakeholders affected. It illustrates how resettlement activities have been carried out utilizing structured participatory processes, particularly in the identification of social impacts, negotiations over compensation, the selection and planning of resettlement locations, and associated economic development initiatives.

The Hexi resettlement project, Gansu

The Hexi (Shule River) Agricultural Irrigation Project, also described in Chapter 8, is located in Jiuquan, Gansu Province, and has been funded by the World Bank since 1996 at an estimated cost of US$300 million. The Bank Group is financing about 50 per cent of the total project cost, and the remaining 50 per cent is financed by counterpart funds from the central and local governments. The project aims are to: (1) resettle 96,000 peasant farmers from Gansu Province to a newly developed irrigation area in Hexi Zoulang; (2) improve and increase the agricultural production of Gansu Province, particularly the production of grain and economic plants; and (3) protect and regenerate the degraded environment. In the Changma Reservoir Resettlement Action Plan most of the resettlers will be moved to Xiahui village, Huahai township. The total number of involuntary

resettlers in Changma reservoir is 580 people (159 households), and the acquired land is 2582 mu.

The case study provides information on the role of communities, addresses the impacts on those resettled owing to the infrastructure interventions and describes the mechanisms established for their participation. It also provides information on how participatory approaches can influence compensation, site selection, housing, infrastructure development and land allocation. The study concludes that effective participation was not achieved, largely because the planning and implementation units lacked the skills to facilitate participation. It shows how capacity is a key issue in relation to the women of the community, and for local officials who lack the skills necessary to fulfil their responsibilities in facilitating community roles.

The Collaborative Hengxian Integrated Approach to Rural Reconstruction (CHINARR)

CHINARR, the project in Southeast Guangxi Autonomous Province described in Chapter 7, is an initiative established by Hengxian County, where the project is located. The overall goal of the project in Phase I was to enhance the implementation of the integrated rural education programme. Specifically, the project aimed to promote health and sanitation, occupational health and safety, environmental education, extension methods and participatory training techniques; to develop appropriate materials; and to improve the knowledge and skills of teachers and other professionals in these areas. During Phase II, the goal and specific objectives were modified to strengthen the awareness of environmental protection in Hengxian (among people at leadership and decision-making levels; cadres and management staff in township enterprises; residents in county and township urban areas; students and farmers in rural areas), and thus enhance the capacity of all stakeholders in the county to participate in environmental protection activities.

The key elements of the project included capacity building for local government officials in the participatory planning, monitoring and evaluation process and the enhancement of environmental knowledge and participatory teaching/training skills for teachers and other professionals. The programme also conducted capacity building at the community level set up farmer field schools to improve community skills and knowledge in health and environment-related areas. As the project tried to link government institutions with communities to respond to needs, it focused on raising awareness of the value of participation among both local government officials and local people.

The Piyuan Canal Rehabilitation Project, Anhui Province

The Piyuan Canal Rehabilitation Project presented in Chapter 9 is one component of the China–Netherlands Poverty Alleviation Project (CNPAP), being implemented in Huoshan County, Anhui Province. The overall aim of the CNPAP is to develop and apply participatory approaches in poverty alleviation work across a range of sectors. For the Piyuan Canal component, this has

involved introducing participatory irrigation management techniques concurrently with the physical rehabilitation of the infrastructure on an irrigation scheme covering 4600ha, and involving 20,000 rural households. While the project aims to develop effective farmer participation in irrigation management on a fairly substantial scale, the scale of the project also necessitated that change be brought about slowly – that the shift from the traditional top-down approach be achieved by developing ownership of the participatory approach *within* the key organizations. During the project there has been a deepening of reforms, accompanied by a growing commitment to ensuring their success among county officials, technical staff and farmers. As a result the project has seen the development of bottom-up initiatives, giving farmers a genuine voice in operation and management. Democratically elected water user associations have played an effective role in project implementation and future sustainability. Throughout the process, careful attention has been paid to ensuring long-term financial viability. This case is an important contribution to the debate concerning the processes of institutionalizing farmer participation and creating sustainable irrigation infrastructure.

County Poverty Alleviation Planning (CPAP) project

The County Poverty Alleviation Planning (CPAP) project described in Chapter 10 was initiated in 2001 as a countrywide initiative managed by the LGOP and its offices in the provincial and county levels of government. The project has been supported by a range of agencies, in particular the ADB and AusAID, with the aim of developing and mainstreaming participatory planning at the village level to improve the impact of poverty alleviation funding. The case study focuses on the changes being instigated in the national poverty alleviation system to bring about the use and institutionalization of a participatory approach in village interventions. It provides a background to poverty alleviation programmes in China and describes in detail the steps to be taken in the process of village planning, including the participatory mechanisms envisaged. The project is of interest in the participation debate because it originates in the LGOP and is not an externally led initiative. Furthermore, it aims to implement this shift in policy and process within the existing institutional structures. To address institutional deficiencies, it has included a systematic capacity-building process that can be studied for its impact and implications. The study stresses the importance of well-informed and influential leaders in promoting new processes and highlights the irony that capacity building is occurring through a top-down strategy for the development of bottom-up participatory methodologies.

Part 3: Capacity building for enhancing community participation

Chapter 11 directs the reader's attention to the key issues of capacity building at the local level of government. The chapter reflects on some of the paradoxes that must be addressed if capacity is to be built. It presents the strategic components of any capacity-building strategy – focusing not only on skills development but on the crucial staff policy issues, organizational development and financial

management necessary to see participation take hold. The key constraints of these ingredients of effective local government are examined and the chapter concludes with a discussion on how the development of capacity can be measured and monitored.

Notes

1 I am very grateful to all those who provided insights for and reviewed this introduction, particularly John Taylor, Joe Remenyi, Li Xiaoyun and Tim Zachernuk.
2 The first participatory project was the Yunnan Upland Management Programme, funded by the Ford Foundation.
3 This point is often overlooked by those differentiating the community participation developed in China.
4 See for instance Navarro, 1996.
5 Notwithstanding the irregularities in the election process, the principle of moving any such decision-making represents a basic change in policy. This point is developed in detail by John Taylor in Chapter 2.
6 Participation has required massive external input everywhere; China is no exception in this regard.
7 See, for instance, PRC, 2002, which acknowledges that it is the sub-national levels of government that implement China's national development agenda, and that the county and township levels are the most important at implementing the government policy on social welfare, human resource development and local economic development.
8 Where it was to be carried out on a larger scale (eg, the World Bank Forestry Development in Poor Areas project, described in Chapter 5) the participatory element was not adequately supported for it to have made a difference to the project.
9 The figures quoted are official government figures based on a poverty line of US$0.60 compared to the World Bank's much higher figures based on the US$1 dollar per day poverty line. The World Bank has estimated that 106 million people still lived in poverty in 1998.
10 This section draws largely on information provided by Li Xiaoyun and John Taylor.
11 Community Development Studies was originally part of Yunnan Academy of Social Sciences; it became an independent organization in 2001.
12 Under the guidance of Nick Menzies.
13 Recent examples of such approaches are the ADB's Yunnan Comprehensive Agricultural Development and Biomass-Based Renewable Energy projects, the World Bank/Global Environmental Facility Nature Reserves Management project in Hubei, Yunnan and Fujian Provinces, and their Sustainable Forest Development Project. The work of DFID (through the Yunnan Environment Development Programme) has been important in extending participatory approaches in areas such as the development of participatory indicators and methodologies for investigating the links between environmental conditions and poverty.
14 And the insistence on community participation as a condition of funding projects.
15 The ADB has provided technical assistance to help the LGOP develop capacity to implement its programme, but the initiative is led from within the LGOP – it is not externally driven.
16 See Chapters 10 and 11 for further discussion of the role and importance of these institutions within the participatory approach.
17 Recently the Ministry of Finance has produced a manual to guide the management of

poverty reduction funds at the village level.

18 I am grateful to Tim Zachernuk for his contributions to this section.

19 One of the primary attitudinal constraints on participation is not about participation in itself but about the participation of the poor: unfavourable attitudes toward the poor often predominate.

20 This is taken up in detail in Plummer, 2000 and investigated further in Chapter 11.

21 See discussion in Saich, 2001, p164.

22 The definition of participation developed in this book would not include this involvement.

23 For a summary of recent approaches, see Li Xiaoyun (ed), 2001.

24 Such as those by O'Brien, 1994, Oi and Rozelle, 2000, Manion, 2000, and Ogden, 2002.

25 The descriptions provided above have been drawn in part from contributions from the authors and the case studies.

Part 1

Understanding Community Participation In China

2

The Context for Community Participation in China

John G Taylor

This chapter, which aims to examine in greater detail the context for emerging participation in contemporary China, will focus on the impact of a number of social and political processes accompanying the post-1978 reforms. These processes have had a marked effect on the forms of participation evidenced in recent years. To examine the possibilities for the future development of participation, we need to understand clearly both these processes and their origins.

In what follows, we briefly outline the main trends of the reforms before going on to assess the social and political processes set in motion by the impact of particular reform measures. We try to show how the impact of reform has provided an opportunity for new social groups to emerge and for existing groups to expand their influence, with both groups being able increasingly to distance themselves from the state and develop a range of activities previously circumscribed by both the state and the Communist Party. At the same time, we also show how the state itself has gradually come to recognize the potentially useful role to be played by civil society organizations, being prepared to give them a greater degree of autonomy in some areas.

These trends have been accompanied in recent years by changes evidenced in the political decision-making process at the local level in the countryside that have also had an effect on participation. These changes can be seen most notably in the operation of village committees (VCs) and in the development of village elections, both of which appear to be creating a basis for increasing levels of participation by villagers.

The Reforms and their Consequences

China's post-Mao reforms, heralding the path to market socialism, began in 1978 in the rural sector, with the dramatic events of agricultural decollectivization and

the expansion of the scope of operation of markets. By 1982, most land had been divided into family farms, with households signing contracts with local government that gave them control over the cultivation and selling of crops in exchange for the provision of labour and taxes in kind to the state. Alongside this restoration of family farms, the government also sanctioned the development of markets, the diversification of rural enterprises and higher state prices on agricultural products. Concomitantly, throughout the 1980s it relaxed restrictions on migration from rural to urban areas. These policies resulted in substantial increases in both agricultural output and farmers' incomes.[1] However, probably their most dramatic result in the 1980s was the massive growth in township and rural enterprises, particularly in coastal and peri-urban areas.[2] Reform policies also resulted in a dramatic increase of migrants into urban and semi-urban areas.[3]

In contrast to these rapid changes in the countryside, urban areas changed more slowly. The state owned most urban factories, and relied upon them as a source of revenue. These factories also provided the urban labour force with a reasonably comprehensive welfare system – the so-called 'iron rice bowl' – of housing, education, unemployment, maternity leave and pension benefits provided for each worker in a state-owned enterprise. By the late 1980s, however, it had become clear that many of these enterprises, with their technology surviving from the 1950s, were neither sustainable nor competitive as China increasingly opened up to the world. Their reform required considerable investment, which the state was unable to provide in many sectors – hence the process of transformation and privatization of state enterprises that began hesitatingly in 1984,[4] was taken up in earnest in 1997,[5] and has yet to run its course.

Alongside these economic changes in urban and rural areas there have also been major changes in social policy. Welfare provision in urban areas has weakened as state enterprises have both declined in number and been unable to meet the costs of increasing social welfare – primarily as a result of the ageing of the workforce and the increasing costs of medical services. Additionally, those employed by the newly emerging collective and privately owned enterprises are employed outside the state, and have to make their own arrangements for social insurance or welfare benefits. Consequently, a substantial number of the urban working population, from workers to managers and the self-employed, have little social security. Indeed, it was estimated recently that as many as 70 per cent of the urban population are not covered by any form of social insurance.[6]

Similarly, welfare coverage in the rural sector is limited. Benefits previously provided by the agricultural cooperative or rural commune are now largely the responsibility of local government. In some areas, townships and villages are able to generate wealth from taxes, revenues, user fees and enterprises to provide welfare services. In other areas, however, and particularly in the inland provinces, local governments can only fund the most minimal of services. The costs of health, education and other services have increased in recent years. For many poor families and vulnerable groups such as the elderly, the only available safety net is the state-provided 'five guarantees' (small sums for clothing, shelter and medical care, subsidies for social services, and aid for establishing income-generating activities). Poverty alleviation funds, provided by the state to China's

nationally designated 592 poor counties, have increasingly been used to support income generation, rather than welfare.[7]

Faced with these problems, the Chinese government has begun to develop new policies on pension schemes, safety net funds at the community level, social security and health provision. Many of these policies require increasing decentralization and a shift in provision to market services and non-profit organizations. They also emphasize the need to strengthen informal community and family support in the delivery of welfare in rural areas. These trends have had an impact on levels of participation, which we will examine later in this chapter.

During the reform period that began in 1978, the main structures of the Chinese state have remained essentially unchanged. However, there have been important legal changes. Following the revision of the constitution in 1982, a series of codes has provided new guidelines across a range of areas, from the environment to labour relations, commerce, regulation of securities and futures markets, consumer protection, banking and insurance, and intellectual property rights. The court system has been extended to deal with mediation and arbitration. New laws, such as the State Compensation Law,[8] have given citizens the right to sue the state. The government apparatus has been restructured to separate it from economic enterprises. The functioning of government departments and agencies has been streamlined, and the civil service system improved. Concomitantly, important changes have occurred within Communist Party membership, with members being recruited from more diverse social backgrounds.[9] Most importantly, perhaps, the state has curtailed what had been its main intervention in people's daily lives until the mid-1970s – the campaigns of political mass mobilization (characteristic particularly of the years of the Great Leap Forward and the Cultural Revolution). This withdrawal of the state, combined with the impact of changes produced by the policies mentioned above, has led to possibilities for new forms of political participation. This has been the case particularly with the introduction of elections for VCs, commenced in Guangxi Province in late 1980, and formalized in the passage of the Organic Law on Village Committees in 1988, to which we refer later in this chapter.

The Impact of Reform

Clearly, these reforms have had both positive and negative effects, most of which have been commented on extensively by researchers, academics and development practitioners. High levels of economic growth, increases in productivity, levels of investment and output, and reductions in the level of poverty[10] have been accompanied by increasing levels of inequality in the distribution of income (spatially, regionally and by class), growing insecurity for employees in state-owned enterprises, substantial increases in levels of migration, increasing unemployment, adverse environmental impact, and – as noted above – problems in welfare provision, particularly to poorer areas.

Attempts by those affected to deal with these problems have led to the emergence of new groups, associations and organizations. At the same time, the state's withdrawal from areas of economic and social life has similarly led to the

development of organizations with greater independence than was possible previously. Additionally, the state has granted greater independence to organizations that have been in existence for some time, in the hope that they can deal with problems generated by the adverse impact of reforms. These trends have created possibilities for increased participation by Chinese people in decisions affecting their daily lives. They have also led to qualitatively new forms of participation emerging – new, that is, to China. In some areas, they appear to be beginning to change the way in which power is exercised at the local level. In what follows, we try to describe these processes in greater detail, by examining the possibilities for increasing participation in decision-making in a number of areas, economically and socially.

Social organizations

As a result of the reforms, a new stratum of social organizations has emerged. 'Social organizations' are defined by the Chinese government as 'mass organizations', occupying a position between state institutions and enterprises and enjoying a degree of formally recognized independence as 'popular' organizations.[11] This stratum comprises organizations with a history of mass mobilization, such as the Women's Federation and trade unions. In recent years, these organizations have begun to adapt to a changing environment, redefining their goals and their relationship to the state, and changing their mode of operation. in addition to these established social organizations, however, new ones have been established. These organizations represent relatively well-defined groups of the population in their relations with the state, provide means of coordination between groups differentiated by the actions of markets, and defend sections of the population against market-induced instability and insecurity.

Changes in the mode of operation of established social organizations are exemplified in the local activities of the Women's Federation. In recent years, the Federation has successfully expanded its work at the local level to involve women working outside the household in small-scale enterprises. Increasingly, it has established branches for this purpose at the township level. The Federation has also set up a women's individual business association for women managers and enterprise owners.

New social organizations are illustrated by the mushrooming of private enterprise associations, the development of specialist organizations in areas of trade, industry, commerce and agriculture, the growth of science and technology organizations, and the increasing number of welfare and public affairs associations.

Whether we are concerned with established or newly created social groups, it seems that in many cases they are enjoying increasing independence and greater involvement in decision-making within their respective areas. This might seem to be contradicted by the fact that all social organizations have to be recognized officially by the state, and be subjected to state supervision. Yet, it is often in the interests of the state, local government and organization members that greater autonomy is exercised – to deal with issues in which the state can no longer afford to be involved, to deal with conflict, and to further common interests in developing the local economy. An example of this shared interest is found in

Gordon White's study of social organizations in Xiaoshan City, Zhejiang Province, in the late 1980s. A potential for conflict was developing between private enterprises, which had been unable to occupy land for longer than three years, and rural townships and villages, which could occupy land for long periods and erect permanent structures on this land. The Xiaoshan Private Enterprises Association took up this issue on behalf of its members, and liaised with the main parties involved – township and village governments, the county-level Rural Enterprise Management Bureau, and the Land Administration Bureau. According to White, 'The result was a proposal that Village Committees would occupy land on behalf of private enterprises and that the latter could then "borrow" it and erect permanent structures on it.'[12] The outcome was a coincidence of interests: the rural township governments agreed because they obtained revenue from private enterprise, which relieved the tax burden on their own collective enterprises; the village leaders agreed because their economic assets increased and they could negotiate grants for infrastructure; and the Private Enterprises Association was able to bring together the concerned government agencies, all of whom were represented in its leadership, to develop a new common policy.

Welfare and the Provision of Social Services

In much the same way that the reforms have had an impact on the development of social organizations, so too have they led to the growth of new forms of organization in the areas of social services and welfare. As mentioned above, welfare provision has declined in recent years, following the withdrawal of state services and the demise of the agricultural collective and the rural commune. In their place, a number of organizations have emerged that attempt to fill the gaps in welfare provision, particularly in poorer urban and rural areas. Overall, welfare provision has become much more decentralized, with local governments becoming the main agencies for accumulating funds and establishing new welfare systems. Accompanying this development, responsibility for welfare provision has moved increasingly to non-governmental organizations, 200,000 of which were registered with the Ministry of Civil Affairs in 1996.[13] These have taken responsibility for filling gaps in welfare provision and dealing with the particular problems of poor families and communities.

Similarly, informal community organizations have come to play an important role, notably in urban areas. Here there has been a marked increase in the number of grass-roots-based organizations offering practical forms of assistance by setting up schools and health clinics. The government has tended to encourage such organizations through tax reductions and exemptions.

In the rural sector, lineages and clans have come to the fore, readopting their traditional roles as local organizers of welfare. The extent to which this increasingly diversified, decentralized and somewhat incoherent collection of organizations can deliver adequate or appropriate welfare services is very much an open question. The question of the extent to which it can deliver these services reasonably equitably, when it is based upon the vagaries of the levels of wealth generated by enterprises in a particular area, is similarly open. Whatever the

outcome, however, it is clear that these developments are enabling households and communities to become involved in decisions on the relevance, direction and operation of local welfare to a greater extent than was previously possible. This potential for enhanced participation through changes in welfare provision has been analysed by several Chinese researchers in recent years. Citing Xiang Biao's work on migration in the mid-1990s, Elizabeth Croll describes how 'some of the most interesting experiments have taken place among migrants in Beijing who, without formal residence rights to welfare support, have informally developed their own self-generating and operating community services including schools and clinics which are largely based on origins or native place'.[14]

Unemployment and social security

Two of the most difficult social areas with which the government has to deal are the provision of social security and pensions. The demise of many former state-owned enterprises has created problems for older workers, many of whom now no longer have access to the level of pension support necessary for their subsistence needs. Similarly, the rationalization of former state-owned enterprises in the ongoing process of privatization has led to increasing levels of unemployment,[15] accompanied by an inability by these enterprises to generate adequate funds to maintain their former workers during periods in which they cannot find work. In recent years this has led to significant levels of protest. In 1995 alone, it was estimated officially that protest marches involving more than 20 people rose to a record high of 1,620, including more than 1.1 million people and occurring in more than 30 cities.[16] Demonstrations have also become frequent in the rural areas, where farmers have complained of high rates of taxation and local corruption; they have also demanded increasing compensation for giving up their housing and the payment of stipends to laid-off workers. The level of protest is exemplified in figures for 1997, during which officials reported that farmers had been involved in more than 10,000 cases of 'unruly incidents' varying from petitions to demonstrations and damaging local government offices.[17]

Gaining little or no support from the official All-China Federation of Trade Unions (ACFTU), workers have begun to form union-type organizations at the local level, where township and county governments, under intense pressure to create or find jobs for the unemployed, have often tolerated and worked with these organizations because they can help solve the employment problem. The government's attempts to deal with employment and worker disputes through establishing enterprise mediation committees and labour dispute arbitration committees at the county, city and provincial levels have illustrated the scale of complaint. As Ching Kwan Lee points out in a recent article,[18] from 1987 (when the mediation and arbitration systems were established) to 1997, 820,000 enterprise mediation cases and 450,000 labour arbitration cases have been heard. However, as with the operation of the ACFTU, there remain strong reservations about the workings of these committees. Decisions are reached by representatives of the labour bureau administration, the ACFTU constituent trade union, and 'economic administrative organs' (representing the employer). Under these conditions, many unemployed workers have complained that they have not

gained a fair hearing. Alternative ways of dealing with their problems have led to the development of local union organizations, many of them set up on a temporary basis, in the textile, coal mining and steel industries. Such organizations are not confined to these traditional sectors, but have also been set up by groups such as sanitation workers in Beijing and taxi drivers in Shenzhen and Guangdong.

Often local governments have responded to the demands of these loose-knit organizations by postponing plant closures and providing temporary funds for unemployed workers. As long as demands are confined to economic and livelihood issues, the Chinese government has adopted a general attitude of tolerance and appeasement towards these organizations. It remains the case, of course, that any generalized, organized labour resistance to the reform process would not be tolerated by the government, particularly if it assumed a political form. This can be seen clearly in the suppression of the new independent unions created briefly in the wake of the 1989 Tiananmen events. What is of interest from the participation perspective, however, is the emergence of these organizations at the local level to negotiate on how to deal with unemployment and its impact on communities..

Similar associations have developed to try to address the problems of older workers, who have not only lost their jobs but seen their pension payments slip into jeopardy. Many of the most publicized protests in recent years have been organized by this group, and particularly by laid-off women workers, who have been affected disproportionately in recent years. A survey undertaken by the State Statistical Bureau in 1998 of 15,600 households in 71 cities revealed that women formed 62.8 per cent of laid-off workers, although they comprised less than 39 per cent of the urban workforce.

Policy Implementation and Participation

In addition to the potential for increased participation through the organization of protest, the development of social organizations and the decentralization of welfare provision, there are further areas in which participation in decision-making is being enhanced through the government's attempts to promote greater efficiency in the implementation of its policies, whilst at the same time reducing its level of involvement in this implementation. This trend is evidenced, for example, in the development of water user associations, described in the participatory irrigation management case study in Chapter 9. With water shortage becoming one of the most important problems in contemporary China, reform of irrigation management is crucial for water saving. Farmer participation through the development of water user associations (WUAs) has been encouraged by the government as a means for improving the efficiency of water use in irrigation. Introduced in the early 1990s, WUAs have resulted in marked improvements in water use, reducing wastage and flooding and improving the maintenance of irrigation systems. They have also been important in building capacity for increased farmer participation in decision-making.[19] WUAs are democratic organizations with elected representatives responsible for implementing farmers'

choices in the use and distribution of water. Farmers shortlist candidates, based on their expertise, and they then organize the ballot for chairperson and executive committee members. Decisions made by the committee on water use can only be agreed after full discussions with farming households within the WUA. Thus far, approximately 250 WUAs have been established in eight provinces.

Attempts to improve efficiency in other policy areas are leading to similar results. The County Poverty Alleviation Planning approach, outlined in Chapter 10, is aiming to improve efficiency in the delivery of poverty reduction funds to poor counties and villages by ensuring that poor households receive the funding due to them. This is being achieved through improvements in targeting and monitoring, utilizing participatory methodologies. The use of these methodologies has necessarily entailed a greater involvement by villagers in the design, implementation, and monitoring of fund use. Recently, the Ministry of Finance has produced a manual for officials to be used as a guide for managing poverty reduction funds locally. The manual details ways in which participation by villagers can be enhanced, instrumentally, in the interests of improved poverty reduction fund management.

As the Chinese government continues to rethink the ways in which and the extent to which it should be engaged directly in policy implementation, it is likely that levels of participation will increase, with the recognition that many of the functions performed previously by local government will have to be taken on by local communities and their organizations.

The Context of Participation at the Local Level

No analysis of the possibilities of enhancing participation via processes set in motion by the impact of reform would be complete without a brief outline of what many analysts have seen as the most important issue – the implementation of the 1987 Organic Law on Village Committees, and its subsequent effect on decision-making processes at the local level. This is discussed in detail when we consider the legislative context of participation in Chapter 4.

The post-1978 demise of agricultural cooperatives and rural communes left village leaders with unclear authority and limited resources, at the very time when, in the mid-1980s, economic reforms were having a substantial impact on the countryside. The response of the government was to revamp and restructure VCs, which had first been introduced in 1982 but then allowed to languish. The 1987 Law empowered villagers to elect committees as self-governing local-level organizations. The committees comprise 3–7 members, elected by the villagers for three years and responsible for all issues relating to the village – but, notably, empowered to address the problems of welfare services, managing village lands, and settling disputes. The Organic Law also stated that the committees would be responsible to village councils, comprising all adult villagers, which would establish a charter for the village and codes of conduct for the committee, and review all committee accounts.[20] Since the introduction of the 1987 Law, the Ministry of Civil Affairs has encouraged the additional establishment of village representative assemblies (VRAs) to oversee the day-to-day work of the VCs. The

VRAs are staffed by representatives 'recommended' by groups of 10–15 village families.

Since 1987, 25 of China's 31 provincial congresses have passed measures implementing the Organic Law, and VCs now exist in virtually every Chinese village. Most commentators have noted progress in implementation. There remain major flaws: in some areas, the ballots are not secret, and there remains a marked tendency for candidates to come from Communist Party members, from entrepreneurs, and from clan leaders within the village.[21] Of particular concern is the limited development of VCs in areas that are both extremely poor and remote, where village leaders receive very limited remuneration for their work and are less willing to take on the committee tasks required. Overall, however, there is little doubt that the committees and assemblies have actively pursued village interests. In many reports, there are accounts of committees successfully reducing charges and levies, securing funds for village services, arranging infrastructure improvements, publicizing financial allocations and details of use of village resources, reducing illegal land seizures, defraying hospital charges and mobilizing uncompensated workers for local employment. Village codes and charters, detailing the rights and responsibilities of villagers and their leaders, have been used to settle water and irrigation disputes, to curb illegal tree cutting, and to set up and distribute funds to village households.

In general, the establishment of VCs has created a new basis for political power – through popular election. It also appears to be producing a changing distribution of power within China's villages, with political authority increasingly having three sources: the VC, the VRA and the village Communist Party branch. Consequently, as a result of the development of these committees and assemblies, not only has the basis for involvement in decision-making become broader, but the focus of power within villages has also changed. Both these processes have had a marked effect on levels of participation in the village, and within the rural sector in general.

In practice, the level of participation achieved is determined by the types of organizations in which villagers and residents are participating. We have noted several of these: social organizations increasingly performing roles mediating between state and civil society; community and non-governmental organizations delivering welfare and social services; groups addressing the needs of the unemployed, laid-off workers and pensioners; associations set up to meet infrastructure needs and to improve the delivery of basic services; and VCs. In recent years, some of these groups have been able to develop greater autonomy from the state than others. Some have been able to become less compliant to the needs of the state. Others, emerging from protests against state policies, have been able to remain independent. The degree of autonomy and the possibilities for independent operation can depend on many factors – such as the sector in which the organization is working, the policies that it is involved in implementing, and the extent to which it can mediate conflict.

All social organizations in China have to be sponsored by a professional management unit, as a precondition for registering with the Ministry of Civil Affairs. The sponsor must ensure that the organization meets a genuine social need, which is not already being met by an existing organization. Governments at

all levels try to use sponsorship as a means of limiting the spread and coordination of social organizations.

However, greater control is required in some areas than others. In those areas in which governments require the involvement of social organizations, the latter can mediate successfully and promote greater participation in decision-making. Thus, social organizations in areas such as quality management, economic information, consumer affairs, and within science and technology have successfully represented the interests of their members in negotiations with the government in recent years.[22] One of the most important newspapers debating the impact of the reforms has been the *Economics Weekly*, published by the Beijing Social and Economic Sciences Institute and sponsored by the Talents Exchange Centre of the State Science and Technology Commission.

As we have seen, there are also sectors in which the needs of the state for greater efficiency in policy implementation are resulting in increased levels of participation. For example, given the current crisis in China's water sector, and its pressing environmental needs, particularly in areas such as natural resources and the management of forestry, it is likely that possibilities for community involvement in decision-making will be further enhanced. Conversely, in other important areas such as the sensitive field of resettlement, despite the introduction of participatory approaches, it is unlikely that these will be extended in the short-term.

Areas in which the impact of reforms has generated protest, giving rise to collective action in support of the demands of groups such as the unemployed, the elderly, laid-off workers and pensioners, will continue to generate greater participation, particularly if these groups manage to convince the various levels of government that they can diffuse conflict. Much the same can be said regarding VCs and VRAs. To the extent that they can deliver local services, organize welfare and manage local conflicts in their areas, their opportunities for increased participation will increase. The greater the difficulty in achieving these aims, the less the likelihood of participation increasing – as seems to be the case in poor, isolated areas. Hence the importance of supporting the introduction of participatory planning in poor communities, to give them the initial assistance required to establish and maintain a basis for household involvement in village decision-making, as outlined in the case study on County Poverty Alleviation Planning.

The case studies presented in this book show that social organizations can act as intermediaries, linking different levels of government with civil society; that village-based and elected groups can successfully represent communities, particularly atomized and vulnerable groups; that social groups and networks can provide effective means for cooperation and coordination, dealing with the impact of reforms in areas where this has been adverse; and that social groups are capable of defending the popular masses against instability, and supporting them in pursuit of perceived grievances and inequalities.

Chapter 11 outlines ways in which capacity can be built to enhance participation locally, but it is important to know what stage has been reached – particularly since the development of participatory processes in areas such as poverty reduction is affected fundamentally by the nature of the village and township side

of the government–community interface. We have seen the emergence and development of organizations, groups and networks enhancing participation, but what has been the nature of the local government response, and has it changed in recent years?

We noted earlier how the locus of power at the village level has shifted towards an authority based on a combination of the power of the VC, VRA and Party branch, with power being legitimized through popular election. As the state gives villages greater authority in decision-making in areas such as village management and the delivery of services, it is likely that the representatives elected to these bodies will be empowered in increasingly diverse areas, and will compete with each other for villager support. In carrying out their tasks, they will also have to negotiate with township and county governments, whose leaders now appear to be elected by more genuinely democratic procedures than previously.[23]

Within this shift towards greater participation, however, the process appears uneven. In some areas, local government has remained relatively unreconstructed. We referred earlier to the difficulties of poor villages in remote areas, where lack of development and revenue inhibits both the emergence and maintenance of participation. Similarly, it seems from research undertaken recently by Oi and Rozelle[24] that there is less incentive for households to be involved in decision-making in villages in which there are relatively high levels of migration and/or high levels of employment in industries outside the village. From this research, it also appears that the greatest participation in decision-making seems to be occurring when the socio-economic situation of the village gives an incentive to villagers to participate, and leaders have limited incentives to restrict their participation. This appears to be the case in villages where the economy is relatively dependent on agriculture, and the village relatively more reliant on its own resources – as is still the case in the vast majority of China's villages. Thus we can conclude that, for the poor, participation in decision-making is expensive and requires support to develop. For former farmers made richer by migration or outside employment, the focus of their participation shifts to the semi-urban area or the regional factory. For the majority of farming households, however, increased participation can bring both benefits and improvements in their livelihoods, as illustrated in each of the case studies.

Concluding Remarks

It is important to add a cautionary note. The trends we have outlined in civil society remain marginal. The Chinese state and Communist Party still exercise monopoly power. To date, no significant groups or movements – let alone parties – have emerged at the local, regional or national level to challenge their control. Furthermore, as Elizabeth Perry and Mark Selden aptly put it in their introduction to *Chinese Society: Conflict, Change and Resistance*,[25] the Chinese state has important 'residual strengths', stemming from its leading popular resistance to the Japanese occupation, founding the People's Republic and overseeing a period of unprecedented growth and improvements in living standards. The state is also seen as being responsible for China's growing international power and prestige as

it assumes the role of a regional, and in some respects a global power. For these reasons, it has substantial support within the population. Yet, as we have seen, this state increasingly finds itself in a dilemma. If it moves too slowly, its policies may not end up meeting the pressing needs of many of its population. Yet, if it moves too fast, it could undermine its monopoly position. Thus the state is prepared to permit a degree of movement in civil society, but only on its own terms. On the basis of this movement, however, organizations have emerged to strengthen civil society, in both its rural and urban contexts. These are beginning to enhance people's participation in decision-making processes affecting their daily lives, as reflected in the studies of participation presented in this book.

Notes

1 Average per capita annual incomes of rural households increased from 133.6 yuan per year in 1978 to 544.9 yuan in 1988, to 2162 yuan in 1998 (*China Statistical Yearbook*, 1999, p338). In real per capita terms, rural incomes increased by 63 per cent between 1985 and 1997 (Oi, 1999). Total agricultural output grew at an annual rate of 4.2 per cent between 1985 and 1997 (Nyberg and Rozelle, 1999, p3).

2 Town and village enterprises currently contribute 40 per cent of national gross industrial output, and employ approximately 130 million workers. The high point of expansion of township and village enterprises (TVEs) was 1984–1994, when their output grew at an annual average rate of 33.9 per cent. By the mid-1990s, however, growth slowed, and their output has declined in a number of years since 1996. See Dernberger, 1999.

3 China's migrant 'floating population' was estimated at between 80 and 100 million in the mid-1990s. See Mallee, 2000, pp83–101. Most commentators variously estimate the current (2002) floating population at between 150 and 200 million people.

4 The Enterprise Bill of Rights was first formulated in 1984.

5 Chinese Communist Party General Secretary Jiang Zemin put forward two crucial tasks at the 1997 Congress: to 'adjust and improve the ownership structure', and to 'accelerate the reform of state-owned enterprises', arguing for the need for 'economies of diverse ownership'. See Solinger, 1999.

6 See Ge Man, 1996.

7 On this point, see Croll, 1994.

8 The State Compensation Law was enacted in 1995.

9 On this issue, see Burns, 1999, pp587–8.

10 Official Chinese government estimates indicate that rural poverty declined from 260 million poor in 1978 to 42 million in 1998 – from about one-third to one-twentieth of the total rural population. These estimates are based on the government's poverty line of $0.66 per day (in constant 1985 purchasing power parity US dollars). As an alternative to this, we can take the World Bank's international poverty line of $1 per day. Using this, 106 million people, or 11.5 per cent of the population, were living in poverty in 1998. See World Bank, 2001.

11 Social organizations are defined in these terms in *The Law Concerning the Registration of Social Organizations*, issued by the Ministry of Civil Affairs in 1989.

12 White, 1994, p213.

13 See Croll, 1999, p695. Although the term NGO (*shehui tuanti)* is used in China, the restrictions surrounding NGO autonomy of action mean that formally they are very different from NGOs in most industrialized countries. For this reason, the term non-

profit organization (*fei yingli zuzhi)* is sometimes preferred.

14 Croll, 1999, pp695–6.

15 The unemployment level is officially 3 per cent of the workforce, but unofficial estimates put the figure at around 20 per cent. For discussion of recent trends, see Burns, 1999, p584. See also Wang Zheng, 2000, p65.

16 Ching Kwan Lee, 2000, p54, note 30.

17 Burns, 1999, p585.

18 See Ching Kwan Lee, 2000.

19 On this issue, see Reidinger, 2001; Taylor, 2001.

20 For an excellent discussion of these issues, see O'Brien, 1994, pp33–4.

21 See Pastor and Qingshan, 2000, pp490–512 and 513–39, respectively.

22 White, 1994, pp203–4.

23 See Manion, 2000. Of particular interest in relation to recent democratic procedures is the analysis of the Buyun township election, p718.

24 Oi and Rozelle, 2000.

25 Perry and Selden, 2000.

3

The Characteristics of Community Participation in China

Janelle Plummer and John G Taylor[1]

Community participation in China arises from a complex canvas of historical, political, institutional, social and cultural realities and histories. As outlined in Chapter 2, the processes taking place in projects and programmes today are made possible by a number of important reforms and shifts in development policy in China in recent years. These include, among others, the rural reforms of the 1980s that shifted the onus of production from the commune to the household, the introduction of democratic elections in village governance, and, more generally, policies that enabled rapid socio-economic reform to take hold. Each of these factors has created space for the development of participatory processes.[2]

While these reforms created the momentum for increasing levels of self-determination and control by farmers, the small pilots that took place in various parts of China throughout the 1990s developed models and described, in the Chinese context, the ingredients of a bottom-up approach. In the early 1990s the central government gave permission to the international donor community to work in agreed provinces and allowed the concept of 'community participation' to be tested in isolated rural development, agriculture/irrigation management, natural resource management, forestry, watershed management, rural water and sanitation, and rural health and education sector projects, as well as multisectoral poverty alleviation initiatives. By doing so they allowed the concept of 'participation' to enter development rhetoric – within the centralized regime governing China.

From this tentative start, a significant collection of projects, a number of identifiable institutions, a PRA network and a group of academics and practioners provided the experience, the evidence and the technical competence to take participatory approaches forward. This has given depth to the experience of participation and capacity for its replication. It has also provided a body of local knowledge on participation that should be disseminated.

Accordingly, the purpose of this chapter is to set out some of the emerging characteristics of participation in China – to consider what community participation is and thereby to answer some key questions in relation to the scope and content of participation in the context of China. In particular, what are:

- the objectives of community participation?
- the forms of community participation?
- the opportunities for community participation?
- the problems and pitfalls to look out for?

The following discussion is illustrated with examples from the eight case studies in five sectors featured in Part 2 of this book.

The Objectives of Community Participation

The development of participatory projects in the political and historical context of China over the last decade has resulted in a group of projects that embody somewhat conflicting objectives. Given the varying agendas of aid agencies, local advocates and formal authorities, it is inevitable that explicit objectives are only part of the story – that there is another level of objectives below the surface of the project documents, another agenda (or more correctly, agendas) being promoted by organizations with vastly different mandates. In order to make sense of the tension between these, the following discussion considers the community participation objectives of each stakeholder group in turn.

Officials' objectives

In the formal documentation, the objectives of community participation in development projects in China have all been instrumental in nature. That is to say, the primary goal of government in embodying the participatory process is the achievement of another end.[3] At the higher levels of government, objectives have developed significantly over the last decade, but it is incontrovertible that policy-makers and officials in the central government are looking to another end – to improve the efficiency of investment in rural development and the rate of progress in poverty reduction. In order to achieve this aim they have acknowledged that economic reforms have not reached all groups, and are beginning to accept that alternative approaches may be necessary to tackle the plight of those marginalized from the benefits of economic growth. The government and its various agencies are gradually becoming aware of the benefits of community participation as an instrument to achieve this objective.

Perhaps the most definitive statement by government in recent years is that of the LGOP on the development of the County Poverty Alleviation Planning (CPAP) policy. This newly developed CPAP process, described in Chapter 10, is based on participatory principles and the institutionalization of farmer involvement in village planning. The objectives of this process set out in the documentation include efforts towards (1) better targeting of the marginalized

poor, (2) stemming resource leakages and (3) promoting greater self-reliance and local sustainability.[4]

The instrumental nature of participatory project objectives is also illustrated in the case of the Piyuan Canal Rehabilitation Project described in Chapter 9. In this case, a focus on long-term sustainability and cost recovery is associated with the efficiency and effectiveness of project investment and a need to reverse the past mistakes of unsustainable infrastructure investment. In the case of the Sino-German Afforestation Project described in Chapter 5, the main reason given in the project finance agreement for promoting participation was improving the attainment of project objectives by creating increased ownership and motivation of beneficiaries.[5]

The objectives of officials at lower levels of government deviate, however, from those of policy-makers in Beijing and at the provincial level. Notwithstanding the few officials at this level that have been exposed to alternative development approaches, in the main, the lack of capacity and vision of most local-level agencies and incumbent officials means that, when they embark upon participatory initiatives, their objectives are inextricably tied to how they see internationally funded projects, and many are driven by perverse incentives. Such was the case in Jinping, in the Forestry Development of Poor Areas Project outlined in Chapter 5, where objectives reflected an interest in the political power and access to capital that such a project facilitated. Other circumstances suggest that the objectives of officials are not so much exploitative as uninformed. Many local agencies have entered into participatory projects and accepted the objectives laid down by donors without understanding the meaning or implications of the mechanisms and processes to which they are committing. In these cases the objective of adopting the participatory approach is simply concerned with procuring donor funding.

In addition, many trained officials primarily see the objectives of participation in relation to the project and sector in which they work (eg, forestry management, environmental protection or infrastructure improvements). In the current climate, most sectors have linked the development of participatory processes to the introduction of the user-pays concept and, in this regard, the objectives of high and lower-level officials converge with those of donors. While many recognize that they must achieve some level of community participation if they are going to increase local government revenue through improvements in cost recovery for basic services, others associate participation only with the community financial contribution, and not with what communities gain from the process.

Advocates' objectives

There is marked variation in the objectives of those advocating participation in China, varying from those who see the participatory project as their (enlightened) counterparts in government see it (as a means of achieving more effective and sustainable results in project implementation) to those who see participation as a part of the human rights debate and promote it as a tool to empower those households marginalized by social stratification at the village level. Empowerment objectives espoused by advocates of participation are generally not explicitly

pursued in project documentation, although they may be a key issue within the project sphere and an important consequence of project-based objectives.

The advocates of participation who documented the case studies presented in this book identified over 50 objectives. In a workshop setting, they then grouped these and agreed that sustainability, empowerment, accountability and good governance, project effectiveness, conflict resolution and community capacity development (in that order) represented the key objectives of participation in the context of China.[6]

Sustainability Sustainability was defined to include both sustainability of project benefits and broader development sustainability through improvements in the livelihoods of the poor. The environmental bias of the term is reflected in the definition.

Empowerment While the project objectives written into the case studies did not mention the need to empower communities, advocates of participation added this as one of the key goals (and outcomes) of the participatory approach. In particular, they highlighted the need to empower the poorest households in relation to the decision-making élite.

Accountability The employment of community participation as a means to develop greater accountability of local officials and agencies is seen as a crucial objective (by advocates and officials alike). Accountability is achieved through transparency, and transparency is achieved through effective participation by the end-users. Developing transparent processes and reducing leakage improves the targeting of resources.

Project effectiveness By far the majority of objectives outlined in the cases concerned the attainment of project related goals: the need to make project implementation more effective, to improve the effectiveness of development initiatives and funding, and to reduce difficulties in project implementation.

Conflict resolution A specific objective noted in this process was the utilization of participatory approaches to resolve conflicts between groups and between conflicting activities. This objective reflects the context in which participation has operated in China – in resource management and the linkages between poverty and environmental degradation. In this sense participation is contributing to an integrated approach to development.

Community capacity development The participation of the community in development objectives strengthens community capacity, in terms of both skills and organization. Cases in the area of forest resource management highlight the need for stronger community capacity to achieve environmental objectives. This objective is mainly described in relation to other ends.

Donor objectives

Donors and development agencies have generally brought a pre-defined set of objectives to participatory projects. Most frequently these are (at least in the documentation) project-specific and ends-related – reflecting a concern with improving the efficacy of project funding and the sustainability of benefits brought about by that funding.

Such objectives are strongly linked to the sector and often come with well-defined methodologies. In the forestry sector described in Chapter 5, for instance, community forestry management is a generic tool introduced into projects irrespective of context. To some extent it is indicative of a process in which donor representatives describe objectives and use tools developed elsewhere blindly – and government officials receive them blindly. In the case of the Dutch-funded project in the irrigation sector (illustrated in Chapter 9) the project funding for infrastructure improvements was conditional upon the introduction of water user groups that Dutch development cooperation had found successful elsewhere. In this instance, the water user committees have been successfully adapted, but the decision to meet objectives through this vehicle was made in advance of any community participation that would have tested the appropriateness of the technique and willingness on the part of the farmers.

Some donor organizations have (implicitly) also used projects as a testing ground to demonstrate means-related objectives. These organizations may be more concerned with the empowerment and capacity of the community, the rights of marginalized groups, and the development of democratic processes than they are with particular sectoral benefits in areas such as forest management or water resources.

Farmers' objectives

The extent to which farmers themselves share these participatory objectives is questionable. Participation is still equated in the minds of many peasant farmers with involvement in the mass mobilization campaigns of the Great Leap Forward and Cultural Revolution periods where they were constantly mobilized for political participation to the benefit of others – Party cadres, government officials and local leaders. They were also mobilized for the implementation of national political policies, many of which brought them little political benefit or meaningful engagement. Hence, many peasant households are wary of participation that involves a mobilization of their communities for the achievement of aims that do not bring them tangible economic or social benefits.

Where farmers have become involved in participatory approaches their objectives have evolved, often starting with little commitment but developing as the process proceeds. In such circumstances farmers show that their objectives are closely related to their livelihoods: improving efficiency or increasing productivity, addressing problems such as food insecurity, improving access to natural resources, providing employment or promoting more adequate welfare provision. More ambitious and experienced farmers see their involvement as a means of

influencing the use of funds designated for use in the village, and helping to resolve conflicts in areas such as land use.

If the concept is politicized, however, or if it is seen as something introduced from outside the village – as something to be adopted and followed at the behest of officials, cadres, advisers or researchers – under present conditions it is unlikely to gain much favour. Obviously, these reactions to participation will vary from one community to another, depending on features such as past experience of involvement in mass mobilization campaigns, the nature of the village leadership, the location of the village, its level of development, and the extent of its involvement in the market. These issues are discussed further in Chapter 4.

For instance, in the Da Maha project, described in the Chapter 5, the villagers defined the objectives of their participation in the project in terms of their being able to:

- build community capacity for self-governance and forest management;
- create interest and enthusiasm in sustainable forest management and utilization;
- allow villagers to share directly in benefits;
- solve conflicts between conservation, utilization, and development;
- enable villagers to protect and improve the productivity of community forests;
- promote awareness amongst villagers of their duties and responsibilities.

This set of objectives from the Da Maha project does not depart far from what one might find elsewhere. While the discussions around empowerment and means-related objectives may be more explicit in other contexts where there is not the same overt concern with the reactions of higher-level officials, the concern is still there, and the ends-related objectives generally dominate. The process-related objectives are only upheld by actors working within and for the enhancement of civil society, whether at a national, regional or local level.

The Forms of Participation

The forms of participation that come about as a result of these objectives are many and varied. But unlike the use of the term 'participation' elsewhere, in China there are problematic historical associations. A lack of clarity in the meaning of participation can create serious misunderstanding for farmers and officials alike. As mentioned earlier, for farmers the concept can be correlated with mass mobilization campaigns and unpaid participation in infrastructure development. Experience of project preparation with county and township officials in Yunnan Province revealed that officials automatically correlated the term with (1) community labour (usually involuntary) and (2) community cost sharing.[7] The lower the level of the official, the greater the misunderstanding.

The rhetoric of participation has become a particular problem in recent years, with all stakeholders feeling comfortable using the words, irrespective of meaning or intent. One needs to go no further than a typical donor or NGO meeting to hear the word 'participation' being used in relation to primary

stakeholder involvement in development initiatives. In China, as elsewhere, there is still a tendency to use the term liberally and without specific definition.

In order to illustrate the meaning of participation in the context of China and the forms of participation that have been achieved over the past decade, the ladder of participation developed by Arnstein and reinforced by Paul has been reinterpreted in the Chinese context.[8] Defining different levels in turn – despite the limitations of this method – provides a better understanding of the type, form and degree of participation. Yet it is also interesting that some Chinese advocates of participation have shown a reluctance to disaggregate the term, and do not engage in the process with ease. Defining and measuring the participation achieved in a project can be a contentious exercise. The ladder formulated by the authors of the studies contained in this book is described in Figure 3.1. The terminology from *notification* through to *initiative* is detailed in the following section. It indicates the various forms of participation in relation to increased levels of decision-making.

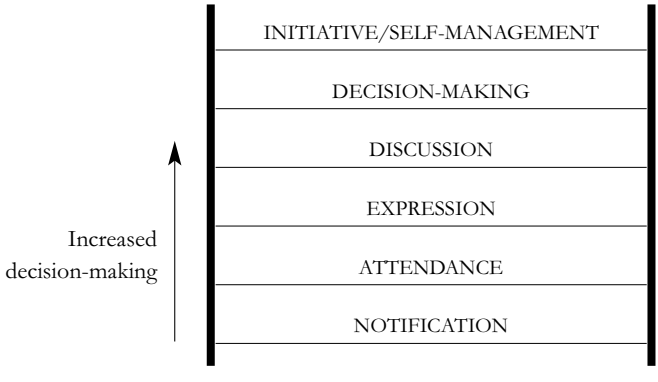


Figure 3.1 *A ladder of community participation in China*

Notification

At its most rudimentary, the involvement of communities takes the form of 'notifying' citizens of activities that might affect them. There is no input on the part of the farmers, no discussion, no right of reply, no involvement in the planning or implementation of the project activity. Notification-participation is very popular today, widely used in master planning in urban areas, and typified by authorities announcing their plans in newspapers. Information is not collected but only imparted, and the government controls the level of information that is conveyed. Authorities make decisions and they expect the public to participate in the execution of the plan. (While Chinese participation specialists placed this *notification-participation* on the ladder, this is likely not to have rated as participation elsewhere.)

Attendance

The next form of participation refers to the situation in which community members physically attend meetings. Given this attendance, officials and project staff expect that farmers will involve themselves, manually and financially, in subsequent activities. Decisions on what information is provided, what the activity will be, when and how it will be undertaken, and the priority it will be given, all lie with the implementing agency. This is the dominant model of participation in rural development initiatives implemented by government. This type of participation occurred in the initial stages of the Sino-German Afforestation Project, and in the Piyuan Canal Rehabilitation Project, as outlined in the forestry and irrigation management case studies (Chapters 5 and 9 respectively).

Expression

A third form of participation, with increasing influence in contemporary China, occurs when communities are given (or seize) the opportunity to express their views. Space is created for communities to share information and knowledge, and officials reciprocate, notify them of project activities, and expect their participation in implementing the activities that are later decided upon by government officials. The flow of information is two-way, but it is not interactive. This situation is illustrated in the example of water pricing in the participatory irrigation management (PIM) case (Chapter 9), where communities are given the opportunity to make their case and there is some discussion of implications.

A more problematic face of this form of participation has been called *confirmation,* and describes the form of participation that occurs when project officials seek community confirmation of their own views. Participatory initiatives developed in China have frequently created this form of participation by only asking participants to become engaged in a narrow band of questions and issues that are closely linked to the decision that an external agent or government official wants to pursue. Examples of this are found in the consultations undertaken during various stages of the project cycle in the Xiaolangdi and Hexi projects, assessed in the resettlement case study (Chapter 8).

Discussion

The next form of participation identified through the cases and experiences reported refers to the participation of communities in discourse – in debating and discussing ideas in their formative stage (eg, village needs and priorities or planning proposals). The expression of individual (and collective) viewpoints is encouraged, and it is possible (although not guaranteed) that these views will influence authorities. The authorities are still ultimately responsible for making the final decision. This type of participation is achieved in the early stages of closely controlled donor-funded projects such as the natural resource management (NRM) cases discussed in Chapter 6 and the latter stages of the PIM cases discussed in Chapter 9. It is also exemplified in the resettlement case studies, in the involvement of villagers in discussions on issues such as

housing design and relocation sites, and in their involvement in the socio-economic survey prior to the design of resettlement action plans.

Decision-making (or mutual decision-making)

A further step on the ladder of participation is one in which the community, the end-users, are fully involved in the decision to be made; they are given space for discussion and for equal decision-making and input into the planning and allocation of resources. This situation has two typical features: the power of decision lies within communities, but this power is handed to them by another party (and can equally be taken away). This level of participation is rare in contemporary China. It is illustrated in the construction stages of the NRM cases (Chapter 6) and the planning stage envisaged in the CPAP case study (Chapter 10), in which village-level poverty reduction plans are developed through a structured participatory process involving all participants in workshops and meetings on identification, planning and budgeting.

Initiative (or self-management)

The greatest degree of participation is found when communities initiate ideas and are able to mobilize themselves to make them happen. The villages initiate and execute the plan. They have control over the decision *and* they control who makes the decision. There is almost no input or support from the centre. This model is typical of modernization and village development models. Post-project management in the Gen Ma County case study in Chapter 6 was ranked as self-management.

It is useful to compare the ladders of participation developed through the case study analysis with the ladder developed for a similar piece of work undertaken in the context of South Asia (Figure 3.2). When we consider these forms of participation in relation to the various stages/activities of the project cycle, it is evident that participation varies considerably from project to project, but that some common themes and achievements have emerged.[9] Experience brings with it familiarity and there is, especially in longer projects, a tendency for participation to evolve. Whereas farmers may in the first instance attend, in the next they may express views, after building more confidence they may be willing to enter into a discussion, and so on.

It is important also to highlight how communities can be manipulated under the banner of participation, to draw attention to situations in which the participation of the community is included without positive intention and for exploitative reasons (to procure free labour and community financing for supply-led initiatives, for example) or to meet donor conditionality for financing, or for financial and political gain.

Opportunities for Participation

One of the common preconceptions about community participation is that it is limited to project planning activities and interventions. This preconception –

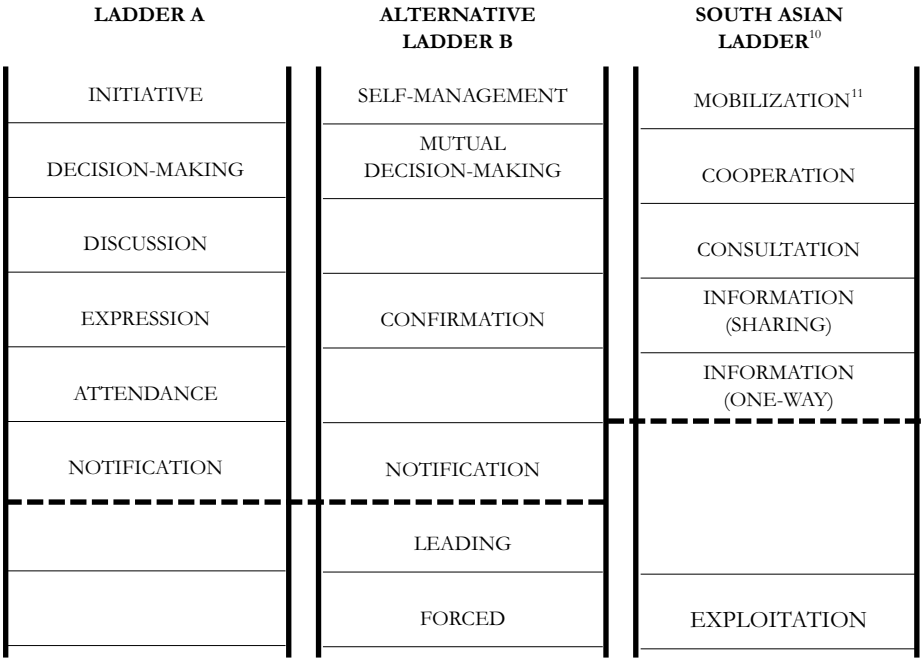


Figure 3.2 *Comparative ladders of participation*

which is widespread amongst academics, donor representatives and development professionals both in China and other regions – tends to limit the potential of the participatory endeavour by drawing limits around *when* participation takes place. In the project context, evidence suggests that it is beneficial to involve communities in a more extensive range of activities, getting villagers involved at the earliest possible stage and extending the participatory process to monitoring and evaluation. This helps to bring about greater ownership and sustainability.

The following section on the opportunities for participation aims to present a framework to develop and examine participatory inputs. There are undoubtedly a number of ways of identifying specific opportunities for participation. The approach adopted here, for the sake of capacity building amongst government officials, is seen from their (project) stance. Communities can and do participate in projects at all stages of the project cycle. Their inclusion in early and later stages creates a very different vision of participation from the limited scope of participatory planning.

Project preparation

Project identification

Participation in development activities begins with the task of identifying the project, and ultimately it is this stage that determines whether a project is

demand-led. Examples abound of projects where communities are told without prior participation what activities will be undertaken, and that they have the possibility of participating in them. Participatory project identification means that communities themselves play a role in deciding on the project they want. A primary example of non-participation at this stage is provided in the case of resettlement. Involuntary resettlement schemes such as those documented in Chapter 8 are just that – involuntary – and any level of participation in subsequent phases is undertaken within this context. But while this is obvious for resettlement, 'softer' donor-led projects in forestry and natural resource management typically fail to include communities at the outset. Typically their involvement begins when certain basic decisions have already been made.

The flip side of this is that sectoral donor projects often elicit primary stakeholder interest, no matter what the project is, as long as it brings with it capital investment and improvements to existing livelihoods.[12] As a consequence, the level of commitment to community capacity building can be very low at the outset. In the case of the NRM project in Qu County documented in Chapter 5, the farmers were involved (through their attendance at meetings) in the first stages of the project but not the decision on the focus of the project, and showed visible signs of disappointment that the project was to be about self-management and not provide new infrastructure or pay for the planting of trees. In the final stages this view had changed and they were all positive about the control that the project had given to them.

Needs identification and project planning

Most projects labelled as 'participatory' make significant efforts to involve households and communities in the process of identifying needs and developing solutions through which the project might address the needs and problems identified. A typical model of what might be considered effective participation in China is one in which farmers are invited to meetings to discuss their requirements, and through a PRA process are able to engage in discussion and decision-making about the possible solutions to these problems. This information is, typically, then synthesized, agreed and moulded into a project format.

In the planning stages of donor-led participatory projects, this stage often follows predetermined methodologies such as the objectives-oriented project planning (ZOPP)[13] techniques used in the Sino-German project or PRA and its associated tools (problem trees, transect walks, village mapping) adopted in the NRM and CPAP projects. The cases show that an effort has been made to ensure all community groups are included in the process of identifying needs and micro-planning, or action planning.

Such is the case in Qu County, mentioned above. All members of the community were involved in a problem identification stage of meetings and interviews that used participatory methodologies to gather local data on demography, economics, geography and topography, to analyse existing forestry management, to express their aspirations, and to describe their ideas on constraints and opportunities in relation to forest resource management. After discussion and agreement on the main problems, the villagers, village cadres and project staff

worked through possible solutions that would be addressed through the project.

The fundamental aim of the CPAP initiative is to ensure villager involvement in the problem and planning stage, and to draw on their own understanding of problems, the indigenous knowledge and skills they bring to bear, and their perceived opportunities. The CPAP planning process is structured around a set of steps for analysis, identification of beneficiaries, formulation of action plans and identification of finances. The form of participation is pre-planned through guidelines directing the actions of officials at each step.[14] The planning documents required for this stage are quite onerous and require skilled stakeholders. Project action plans include activities, budgets, beneficiaries and monitoring indicators; a logical framework is required, and a project management system stating the monitoring procedures and feedback mechanisms. These documents are verified and agreed at village level in a village meeting forum. Farmers participated through a process of personal assessment of each component of the proposals. They were given the opportunity to provide independent views, although many preferred to discuss and arrive at conclusions jointly. In this process, villager participation was facilitated, but there was often an awareness amongst them that, despite their involvement in the actual implementation of the plan, they would not be as fully involved; that, as the plan was operationalized, it would become more of a top-down process. Many villagers also considered their involvement in the problem and planning stage to be excessively time-consuming. Some contrasted this with the limited and insufficiently detailed material that they received at the conclusion of this stage. Despite this, however, the case study shows how substantial community trust is built during the problem and planning stage, and how farmers use their involvement to argue for greater participation throughout the planning exercise.

Project design

Detailing the proposals so that they become viable technical and financial plans constitutes a final stage of project preparation, and generally occurs before any implementation takes place. Details of precise layout, size and specification of the improvements to be made (such as the location and types of irrigation, or the tree selection and the areas for planting), do not always involve communities on the grounds that they do not have the technical knowledge. In the case of the piloting of the Forestry Development in Poor Areas in Jinping County (discussed in Chapter 5) households dependent on forests for their livelihoods were excluded from the decision-making over tree species and the types of non-timber forest products to be developed as a part of the project. Yet in the case of the Sino-German Afforestation Project (also discussed in Chapter 5), farmers were given information so that they could themselves make these technical choices. Not only were they empowered by the process, but they also owned the decisions made, and worked hard to make the solutions successful.

In the Da Maha NRM project, villagers acknowledged the importance of decision-making at the stage of the project design and reflected this concern by voting in a village leader who had access to the technical knowledge and information needed to see some progress in the way their forests were being managed.

This step saw a radical change in the forest rules and the selection of wardens, both of which strongly affect villagers' livelihoods.

Project implementation

The execution or implementation of environmental and poverty reduction projects in China inevitably includes physical environmental improvements as well as capacity building and other community and institutional development activities.

The project implementation plan might envisage the use of community labour in the construction of irrigation channels or afforestation activities. We have noted above the tendency for participatory projects in China to be automatically associated with labour provision. This can fundamentally misdirect the very nature of the participatory project away from decision-making and towards exploitative use of poor households – and is very distinct from the participation established with non-poor communities.

A number of questions test the way community labour is included in a project:

- Who decides that the community will provide labour – the officials or the community themselves?
- Do villagers have a choice to participate in decision-making without participating through labour?
- What payment is being made to those who provide their labour – are these normal wages and are they equal for all?

Community involvement in capacity-building aspects of project implementation is obviously a precondition for villager participation in other stages of the project. Capacity building needs to be an ongoing and flexible process that can be adjusted to suit the requirements of the villagers and the direction of the project.

One of the common problems with the implementation of capacity-building activities in projects is the capture of training and familiarization visits by the non-poor and élite, and not by the target beneficiaries. The marginalization of women typically occurs in the implementation of capacity-building programmes. This is exemplified in the case of Jinping County, where men were taught how to prune trees, despite this being a traditional women's activity. In the resettlement case study, visits to discuss site relocation and housing design were used by more affluent groups to their advantage.

Project management

Project management is a key part of giving the community control over decisions being made, and the way the decisions are made, yet rarely is it handed to communities. Conversely rarely do communities have, at least at the outset, the capacity to perform this role. Significant organizational and individual capacity building is necessary to ensure effective community management.

Central to effective management by communities is the identification of trusted and capable leaders. The key lesson in the case of Qu County (Chapter 6) was the importance of a committed leadership, trusted by the community. In this case a

change in leadership facilitated the effective implementation of a plan to harvest a section of the forest using community labour and rewarding the community with payment. A change in the understanding of opportunities and benefits of community activity followed, and once his credibility was proven, the new leader was supported wholeheartedly in all community initiatives.

Post-project monitoring and management

Participation in project monitoring is typically very weak, and this is the case as much in China as elsewhere. Farmers who may have participated meaningfully in all stages of project planning and implementation are then excluded from the monitoring of project outcomes or in the evaluation of overall project effectiveness. Evidence from project experience suggests a number of reasons for this lack of grass-roots involvement in monitoring. First, 'telling it like it is' – especially when the findings are negative – is something that poor farmers will avoid for fear of reprisal. Second, officials and donor agencies both seek a certain result, and have a vested interest in reporting a particular outcome. This is not unexpected: officials must meet their own performance evaluation, and many would fear that a poor project evaluation would affect their career. Donors also do not necessarily always want to hear all the facts, if exposing these facts does not work in their interest. The desire to ensure a continuing presence in China, or their aim to replicate grass-roots approaches (despite outcomes or cost-benefits) is often higher on their agenda than the inculcation of participatory monitoring and evaluation. Complicating this with the views of the farmers themselves may not be in either party's interest. Third, the lack of focus on participatory monitoring by donors and within projects has meant that the capacity to perform this task is limited and is relatively undeveloped, both within the supporting consultants' group and within projects.[15]

Both the forestry cases presented in Chapter 5 illustrate the lack of involvement of poor households in monitoring. Whilst the involvement in land-use planning aimed for significant levels of decision-making and management, in neither case was the evaluation stage participatory. In the case of the integrated rural development project documented in Chapter 6, whilst PRA tools were used in an official's evaluation workshop, the absence of a community perspective, the focus on outputs rather than impacts, and the lack of baseline information all meant that monitoring and evaluation were compromised.[16]

Some projects, however, have developed significant participation in the ongoing management and post-project activities (and this includes monitoring of funds). In the natural resource cases presented in Chapter 5, participation peaked, in both the Cao Hai and Gen Ma projects, in this post-project stage when external agents and officials had withdrawn and handed over to the community. The communities were empowered to initiate, review and control an ongoing process. In the case of Cao Hai, because revolving funds are owned collectively, villagers constantly supervised their use. Implementing a system established early in the project, the villagers carried out self-monitoring and evaluation that suited their circumstances. This evaluation was fed back and, in one cited instance, further inputs were adjusted, based on self-

evaluation and recommendation, to suit the higher levels of capacity within the village.[17]

Another key issue is that when monitoring takes place, it tends to focus on inputs and outputs, rather than on the overall impact or outcome of the process and intervention. Monitoring of impacts necessarily involves end-users, while monitoring of inputs and outputs (such as money spent and amount of pipes laid or trees planted) can be done at an arm's length.

Project financing

The understanding that participation in project activities equals payment for these activities is a key issue that may constrain the effective participation of poor households. Experience in Yunnan suggests that many officials not only envisage financial contribution without decision-making, but they have developed scenarios for poorer groups who cannot pay. In Ning Lang County, county-level agriculture officials expressed the view, often with reference to the labour of women, that if some poor households could not afford to pay their contribution, they could simply provide more free labour.[18] This lack of understanding of the productive-domestic-child care commitments of women, and the need of the poor to spend their time in either productive or survival activities, is a key issue in relation to participatory projects that is often ignored by unskilled government officials.

Whilst it is important to note the link between financial involvement on one hand and the sustainability and motivation of communities to play a continued role in development activities on the other, it is also crucial to recognize the importance of linking any farmer contribution to a commensurate degree of self-management and decision-making if that sustainability is to be achieved. If farmers are to pay they must also decide what they are paying for, and they must also be the ones to decide that they are going to pay. Typically, the financial contribution from farmers is involuntary. In the Sino-German Afforestation Project, for instance, the community input was 10 per cent of overall costs (which could be payment-in kind), but the community was not consulted at all in this decision.[19]

It is also important to recognize that, with this contribution, the status of farmers changes – they become the client rather than the beneficiary. What we do not see in the cases presented here is any change in officials' sense of accountability to the farmer/client. This problematic relationship between local officials and farmers is discussed in detail in Chapter 4.

Analysing Project Participation

Despite its limitation – and focus on project ends rather than means – this project cycle approach to considering each element in community participation in turn is practical. It promotes a variety of opportunities for participation in the minds of those responsible for its implementation.

It can also be used as a tool to analyse the degree of participation occurring at any one stage within the project cycle. Accompanied by qualitative descriptions

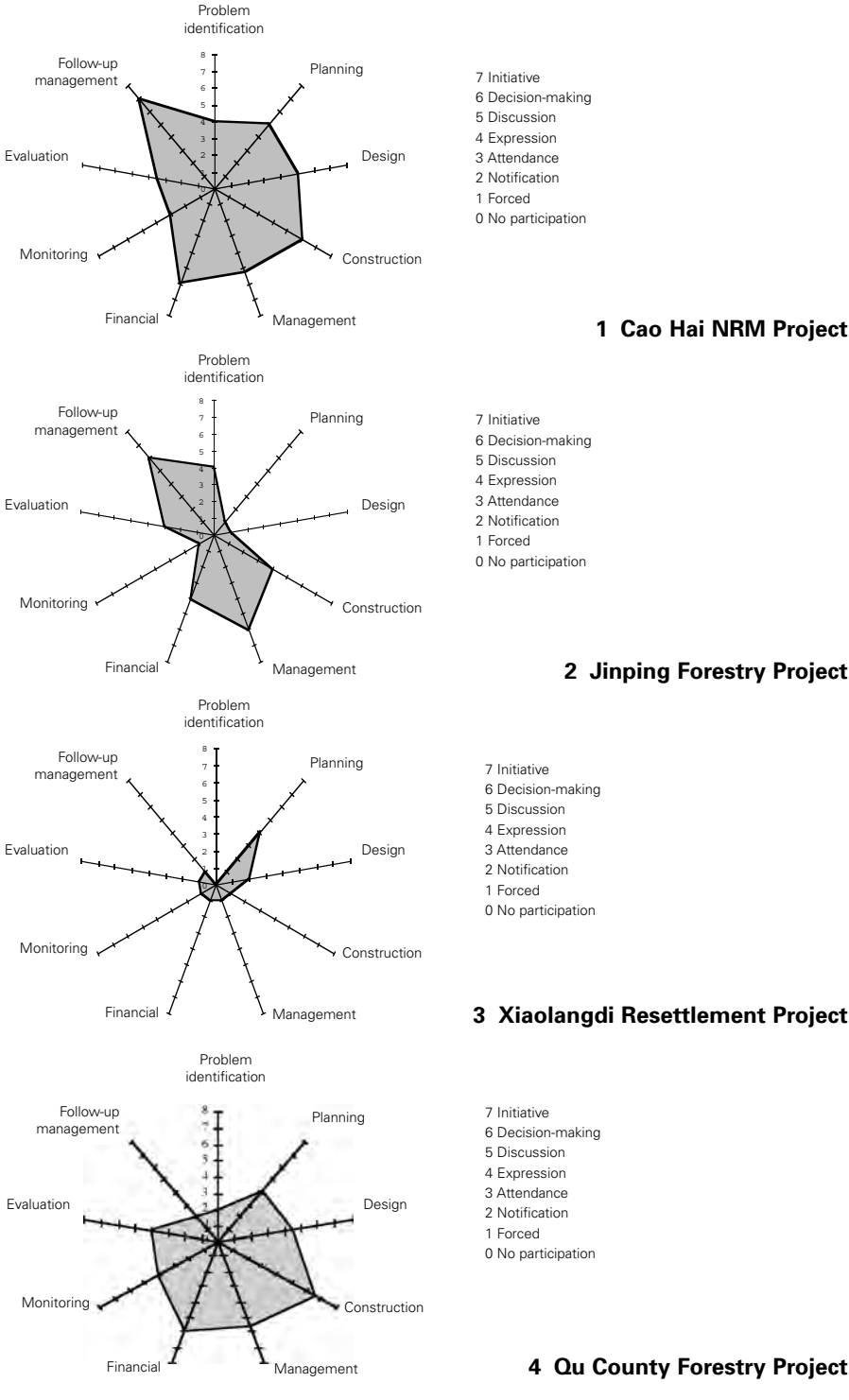


Figure 3.3 *Community participation compared in relation to the project cycle*

of the participation achieved it can provide a picture of how the participation of projects is structured, as well as detailing more specifically the forms of participation achieved, and where strengths and weaknesses lie. It also provides a useful comparison between projects and shows in illustrative terms that participatory projects are often very different. Evidence suggests that, compared with donor-imposed forms of participation, home-grown projects often display a very different picture of when, and to what extent, participation occurs.

Figure 3.3 provides this comparison – juxtaposing four of the projects included in the case studies. The 'picture' of their participation varies considerably. It is important, however, to understand the limitations of this illustrative tool. Although it certainly gives us an immediate idea of achievements and trends, it may also be necessary to elaborate on the reasons for the differences. One of the most significant considerations is the issue of scale. Projects like Qu County involved 43 households in a single village (perhaps 200–250 people), but others such as Xiaolangdi involved 188,000 people (147 villages), while in the case of Jinping 5043 villages took part.

As can be seen from the case studies, current forms of participation vary from attendance to discussion and involvement in decision-making. However, in most projects, the latter still does not play a major role, and the strongest form of participation – that of self-management – is found very infrequently. The only possible example of this in our case studies is to be found in the Da Maha case, a pilot initiative involving less than 40 households.

Problems and Pitfalls of Participation

The masquerade of participation Community participation is a term increasingly used and abused by development practitioners in China and others. The danger is that projects hide behind a 'participatory' banner, whilst creating a project that supports the official (not the people's) agenda. The concern over this misuse has become so evident that the phrase 'tyranny of participation' has been coined, and points towards the widespread misuse of participation in development projects.[20] This misuse includes the manipulation of communities.

Imposed participation As noted above, a further problem often associated with community participation in China is that it is imposed by the government, or by donors of donor-funded projects. In the case of the resettlement project there was a push for participation at the latter stages.

Involuntary participation It is useful to remember that participation cannot be involuntary – the two are mutually exclusive – but the process we see in the resettlement cases does facilitate a framework for resettlers to make decisions about their livelihoods.

Manipulative participation Frequently in China, the participation of the community is included for exploitative reasons. Communities are included in the service

delivery process without positive intention or meaningful end. The instrumental motive may be to obtain free labour, to obtain community financing or to meet donor conditionality.

Poor quality facilitation As can be seen in a number of the case studies, the various stages of participation are often poorly conducted – intent only on achieving the requirements of funding, agencies have allocated neither the time nor the funds to the processes involved.

Sustainability? Project participation has not always proved sustainable, especially when supporting mechanisms are removed. Frequently we see communities go back to being the passive recipients of development after they may have tasted some influence over it within the boundaries of a project. In many cases this is because legal and administrative barriers have not been removed, and there is no official standing for the community once the project framework is removed. Participatory endeavours often continue in a state of fragile trust.

Participation for the poor, but not for the rich Often the poor are expected to participate under the banner of sustainability and ownership – contributing both their time and money – whilst the non-poor receive services with little involvement.

Local government accountability and responsibility In the Chinese situation, local officials frequently act as though the formal involvement of communities absolves them of responsibility for project outputs. The participation of the poor does not remove the responsibility of the government to ensure efficacy and success.

Concluding Remarks

This chapter has attempted to outline the key characteristics of participation in China today, to give a sense of the types of objectives that are occurring in projects and programmes, and how this relates to discussions oriented to means and ends. The participation taking place is overwhelmingly instrumental in nature but occurs at various levels in various stages in the project cycle. An interesting contribution of this process to the global participation debate is the idea of *confirmation-participation*, by which farmers are invited, through a process of limited consultation, to confirm what the donor or government official already knows.

Notes

1 We are grateful to participants in the Beijing Synthesis Workshop held in October 2002 for the contributions they made to the content of this chapter.
2 For more detailed information on these reforms see the preceding discussion in Chapter 2.

3 For further reflection on the means and ends discussion see, for instance, Moser, 1983.
4 For a discussion of the objectives of the County Poverty Alleviation Planning Approach see ADB, 2002, p24.
5 Project Finance Agreement, GTZ-PRC China, 1998.
6 Notably they chose not to include poverty reduction, benefit sharing, meeting donor requirements, and accessing indigenous knowledge as objectives in their final analysis.
7 Author communications with officials at township and county levels in Yunnan.
8 Arnstein, 1969; Paul, 1987.
9 This ladder ranking is not meant to reinforce or condone an understanding that participation is only related to project ends.
10 Presented in Plummer, 2000.
11 The term 'mobilization' is used here in the participatory, rather than in the political Chinese sense, where 'mobilization' takes place for political ends.
12 Often it can be seen that the biggest problems farmers have is their health – if the project floated past them is a health project. The fundamental issue they are concerned with is the lack of schools – if an education adviser is visiting – and so on.
13 ZOPP (*Zielorientierte Projektplanung*) is a project planning and management method that encourages participatory planning and analysis throughout the project cycle via a series of stakeholder workshops.
14 Li Xiaoyun and Remenyi, 2002, p10.
15 It should be noted that participatory monitoring and evaluation is a largely undeveloped area in most countries and capacity in this area is generally weaker – although reasons for this may vary.
16 Zhang Lanying, 2002, p20.
17 Ren Xiaodong, 2002, p11.
18 Author experience in project preparation in Yunnan.
19 Liu Jinlong, 2000, p13.
20 See, for instance, the various cases provided in Cooke and Kothari, 2001.

4

Key Factors and Processes Affecting Participation

Janelle Plummer and John G Taylor

The development of community participation in China is shaped by a range of factors and processes that influence it at every turn. Whether it be farmer capacity, project funding or the broader policy environment, evidence strongly suggests that the objectives established, the forms achieved and the vehicles adopted are the result of a complex interaction of macro- and micro-level factors.

This chapter first examines those factors that are *external* and cannot be addressed by the stakeholders within the confines of a project. These factors interact to form the operating context of a project or initiative and include the legislative, administrative and policy contexts that enable, disable or encourage community participation. This discussion extends that on key reforms provided in Chapter 2. The chapter goes on to consider the factors that are very much *internal*, those aspects of the community and individual participants that ultimately influence the shape of the participation achieved. These factors characterize the participation process in relation to participants and can be influenced by enhancing the social and human capital of the participants. The chapter then extends this discussion to consider the *processes* affecting participation, looking at the interface between local government, village politics, the village community and organizations introducing and furthering participatory approaches. These issues are all critical to capacity building for effective implementation at the local level. The case studies also indicate that the participation achieved in the context of a project is an outcome of the structures, processes and resources defined for and controllable within that project. Thus another set of constraints considered in this chapter are purely *project-related* and fall within the scope of the project design.

Unsurprisingly, the critical importance of this information extends beyond an understanding of the framework in which existing participatory initiatives are played out. In practice, it creates a canvas on which the *potential* for participation

can be drawn. Institutional factors – particularly those that can be addressed through capacity building in implementing organizations – are addressed in Chapter 11.

External Factors Influencing Participation

The reforms carried out in China since 1978 have enhanced the possibilities for participation in civil society and within the rural sector. These possibilities have been discussed in Chapter 2, where we outlined the broader context for participation, showing how the reforms have provided opportunities both for the emergence of new social groups and for existing groups to expand their influence, with both new and existing groups being involved in a range of activities previously circumscribed by the state and the Communist Party. The discussion described how the Chinese state has gradually come to recognize the potentially useful role to be played by civil society organizations, and the specific ways in which it is giving these organizations greater freedom of movement. During the 1990s, the state has tried to reaffirm its control over the countryside by enhancing both cadre accountability and village autonomy.

Policy and legislative context

Political changes enhancing possibilities for participation in the countryside have been reflected in policies establishing a framework for village reorganization. In the mid-1980s, The National People's Congress (NPC) Legal Affairs Committee and the Ministry of Civil Affairs began discussions on how to rebuild the system of political power in the villages, following the demise of the former commune system. Important leaders within the NPC[1] formulated plans to strengthen massively the village committees first set up in 1982. In 1985, efforts were launched to upgrade these committees, with the Ministry of Civil Affairs beginning to work on documents for widespread distribution. These documents explained how to set up village committees and outlined the content of appropriate regulations for their operation. The suggested changes met opposition in the NPC, with opponents claiming that self-governing village committees might ignore state interests and, more particularly, township instructions. Despite this, however, with the growing support of the NPC, the Organic Law on Village Committees[2] was approved by the NPC in November 1987. The Ministry of Civil Affairs set up a Department of Basic Level Governance specifically to oversee the implementation of the Basic Law.

Following the post-Tiananmen Square clampdown, implementation of the bill was slowed,[3] but in 1990 assumed importance again with the convening of a major conference on village-level political organizations, sponsored by important agencies such as the Ministry of Civil Affairs, the Central Policy Research Office, the Communist Youth League, and the All-China Women's Federation (ACWF). Following the resolutions of the conference, the Ministry of Civil Affairs instructed every county to set up ten 'demonstration villages', complete with local regulations determining the operations of village committees.

Into the 1990s, action towards village-level reform focused on the development and enactment of guidelines for elections. These included, for instance, the requirements for registration, nomination, voting procedures and counting of ballots. As noted in Chapter 2, village committees (VCs) and village representative assemblies (VRAs) were set up with accompanying codes of conduct and charters. The purpose of these was to establish, and mutually agree, the standards and means for villagers and village cadres to undertake the management of the village.

A new stage was reached in 1998, when a Revised Organic Law was passed by the NPC, clarifying electoral procedures, and enabling VCs to set up legal frameworks through which villagers can have some recourse over illegal and improper conduct or incorrect procedures. Significantly, however, the Law states clearly that the Communist Party branch is the village's 'leadership core'.[4] Most recently, in some areas, attempts have been made to extend direct elections to the township level, but, as with the early efforts at the village level, they have been criticized as 'unconstitutional'.[5]

The trend towards increasing involvement by farmers is supported by policy statements made by the President of the PRC. In 1998, Jiang Zemin stated:

> *'We must emphasize how to mobilize farmers and address it as our main work. The lessons we have learnt from our development experiences during the last decades indicate that the more initiative farmers have, the more progress can be achieved in rural development. We must not only be concerned with farmers' economic interests but also with their political rights. We must respect farmers' rights and learn how to work with farmers in a consultative way.'*[6]

Such statements mark a definite shift in perspective, a recognition that, in earlier years, policy did not result in improvements in endemic poverty, and an acknowledgement that it is necessary to work with villagers who have been marginalized, and engage them in the process of improving their livelihoods.

In specific terms, the policy context tends to vary from sector to sector. For the purposes of this work (which focuses largely on the environmental sectors as well as poverty alleviation more generally), the policy framework for participation is largely consistent. Within each ministry's work, such as forestry, agriculture or water, there has been an effort to include explicit statements in relation to the participation of primary stakeholders in the sector-wide policy, to spell out that the intention is to involve farmers in development initiatives which affect them.[7]

Despite this elaboration of policy, there have been only limited, concessionary changes at the county, township and village levels of government. The following sections therefore describe how this policy framework has not always been backed up by the administrative and procedural changes necessary for its effective implementation, or by financial resources that would enable the policy to be operationalized at the local level. Consequently, the implementation of the policy framework has not always resulted in an increase in the participation of poor households in decision-making.

The legal framework for participation in rural development, environmental and poverty reduction projects includes a set of laws pertaining to development and people's rights in each sector. Innumerable project documents begin with this

set of laws as though they provided some basic ground rules for the activities envisaged. Yet, the role of law in China is not synonymous with that found in Western contexts, in developing countries that have modelled their legal systems on Napoleonic codes or common law systems, or in countries that have promulgated written constitutions. Many of the legal concepts that Western readers take for granted are still relatively new to both institutions and individuals. In China, traditionally the Communist Party has been synonymous with the Law. The borrowing of foreign forms of law in the post-1978 reform period (from European and North American models) has not been accompanied by the liberal norms supporting individual rights or by those that would restrain the exercise of state power commonly found in Western law.

Accompanying the economic reforms of post-Mao China and the desire to create an enabling framework for national business and foreign investment (including entry into the World Trade Organization), over the last two decades the Chinese government has undertaken substantial law making and created new legal institutions. Many changes in legislation have underpinned opportunities for participation[8] and more recently there have also been significant changes relating to rights and civil society organizations.[9] While such examples show how the areas of the law and its implementation can change, nonetheless the enactment of the law, and its interpretation and enforcement at the local level, often lag behind the rapid socio-economic changes taking place It is notable, too, that contradictions creep into the overall legislative framework, and some of the laws promulgated since the early 1980s have gone beyond the scope provided for under the constitution. Other bills and proposals (necessary to meet international agreements) have been blocked *because* they contradict the constitution.[10] Moreover, as noted by most commentators, the official desire to 'rule the country in accordance with the law' *(yi fa zhi guo*) does not amount to readiness to relinquish political control of legal processes and institutions.[11]

The Organic Law on Village Committees and the Law on Village Self-Governance

In Chapter 2, we looked briefly at VCs, noting their benefits to the government, but also the opportunities they have created for initiating community participation. In discussing the legislative context for participation we need also to note the main characteristics of the laws relating to the development of VCs and VRAs.

The promulgation of the Organic Law on Village Committees[12] took place in 1987 based on the following principles:

- direct election by villagers of VCs;
- more candidates than the number of offices;
- secret ballots;
- majority voting;
- elections every three years;
- public counting of ballots;
- the right of candidates to campaign.

As we noted earlier, the implementation of the law has, theoretically at least, increased levels of political participation for many of China's 800 million village inhabitants, but implementation has been affected by a number of other political, historical and logistical issues. One of the primary concerns has been the nomination of candidates by the Communist Party – a process that hampered change in the early days and still exists in some villages. In 1998, an additional law, the Law on Village Self-Governance, was promulgated and prohibits the Communist Party from involvement in the nomination of electoral candidates. Today there are examples of effective nomination processes but, in practice, many villages still rely on the Party to draw up the set of candidates for election. Apart from Party interference, the logistical problems and marked anomalies of process, of ballot papers, of secrecy and of ballot counting have affected the degree to which the outcome reflects the will of the people. In addition, the level of illiteracy, especially in some of the poorer areas, can affect a significant percentage of the vote: 'creative solutions' to support the illiterate in their right to vote present enormous opportunities for vote tampering, and election officials are inadequately trained and monitored. Numerous instances of corruption – such as votes cast by children – have affected the degree of fairness, honesty and secrecy.[13]

At the same time, cultural traditions affect campaigning and the way the vote is carried out – even when all circumstances are ideal. The best candidates do not always run for office because they do not want to make decisions that result in unpopularity and hostility, and they may be reluctant to campaign against others for fear of reprisal. There have been problems with process, for example:

> *'marking ballots in groups rather than in the privacy of a voting booth even when one is available, sending representatives around the villages to pick up ballots, and deciding how to vote through discussions with other villagers at the voting station are still widespread practices. These are good examples of how community-oriented values and the lack of a sense of privacy in the countryside shape elections in ways that make China's experience of democracy different from that of the generally more urban citizens of liberal democratic states.'*[14]

Despite the acceptance of many that this is all part of the Chinese way, there is also a degree of scepticism in some villages about the roles and relationships between the Party leader (who controls local industry) and the elected village head (who controls land, agriculture, fees and taxes).[15] Some Party officials campaign to become village leader and other elected leaders are recruited into the Party after election. 'They share the same trousers like a husband and wife.'[16] Even where there is no question of overlap, the relative importance of the Party branch and the VC remains an important factor determining local governance.

Despite these many and varied problems, however, the Organic Law on Village Elections has created an important precedent for community participation and the involvement of villagers in decision-making over those issues that affect them. It provides a structure and procedural backbone. While the process of change is gradual, the law is being implemented with greater meaning as capacity grows and the process takes hold. However, legislation alone cannot bring about the change in psyche necessary for villagers to feel that they have a role to play

and that their opinion makes a difference. These issues are critical both in choosing village leaders and deciding on other matters such as tree species or drinking water supplies. The development of the capacity of officials and the villagers is a cornerstone of this change.[17]

Policy leadership

Alongside the continuing monopolization of state power by the Communist Party, important changes have occurred both within Party membership and amongst state officials. First, it is clear that the background of Party members has changed. They now come from more diverse social backgrounds than previously.[18] Criteria for membership have been extended to include issues related to economic development, such as entrepreneurship and different types of ownership. At the national level, leaders are increasingly younger, better educated and more fully informed about world events.[19] Political reform has also brought changes to government administration. Since 1993, civil servants have returned to being selected through open, competitive examinations, with a subsequent weakening of the influence of the networking (*guanxi)* system. These changes have meant that, overall, the management and technical quality of government employees have improved. However, alongside this it should be noted that corruption reached unprecedented levels in the mid-1990s, with tens of thousands of cases being reported annually. Such corruption has been a problem particularly at the local level, which might seem to imply that improvements in quality are not found in equal measure in the various levels of the political and administrative system. Whilst it is undoubtedly the case that officials at the national and provincial levels tend to be better educated in a formal sense, and more knowledgeable about events in both China and externally, it is also the case that these officials readily accept the shortcomings of policies implemented at the county, township and village levels, since they do not have to be directly involved in the difficult process of community implementation. Paradoxically, in several sectors such as forestry management, for example, they tend to be the ones sent on participatory training courses, rather than lower-level officials.

Overall, it remains the case (as highlighted in the CPAP study in Chapter 10) that policy leaders remain sceptical of participatory approaches and are often reluctant to introduce them because they require such a fundamental change in both working skills and attitudes. As noted in the CPAP case, even where policy leadership is favourable, the majority of officials, and particularly those at the local level, remain hidebound within former top-down, command economy approaches, with their overwhelming emphasis on reporting and accounting skills, focusing on the all-pervading need to meet targets and goals set by higher levels. Policy leaders have not matched their support for participation with a change in the performance monitoring of their staff. Similarly, the use of participatory approaches in the rural sector requires a totally different set of skills from those that have been learnt traditionally and policy leaders have neither recognized nor appointed the staff needed for capacity building. In the area of poverty alleviation, despite the support given by the leadership of the LGOP, most officials are still not convinced of the efficiency improvements to be gained

from the use of participatory approaches. By comparison, there is notably greater acceptance in the water and forestry sectors, where change has been taking place over a longer period.

Administrative factors

As with the legislative structure, the broader administrative framework lies outside project and local government control, and as such it is an external factor influencing or potentially constraining the development of participatory processes. Despite the emergence of significant policy statements encouraging participation by farmers, such as those by the LGOP for example, there has been only limited reform in those administrative issues that stand in the way of the development of a sustainable environment for participation. The close relationship between the administrative and the political context reflects the difficulties in creating strong support for widespread participation and proactive involvement of poor farmers. In the current context, the participatory approach must therefore contend with a context in which structures and systems are still framed for the implementation of conventional decision-making processes: the degree of decision-making at each level of government is strictly defined and closely guarded.

Administrative structure

The highest body of state administration in China is the State Council, which is the executive organization of the NPC. In theory, it is accountable to the NPC and its standing committee. The work of the Council is directed by an executive board comprising the Premier, vice-premiers, state councillors, and the Secretary-General. Under the State Council are the various ministries, commissions, and ad hoc organizations administering social and economic affairs. Also reporting to the State Council are the provincial and municipal governments, together with the governments of China's autonomous regions. These urban and regional administrations oversee county and district administrations, below which are township administrations. Beneath these formal levels of government are local village organizations – the committees and assemblies defined by the government as mass-based, non-governmental organizations, outside the formal governmental structure. During the last decade, the powers of people's congresses at each level have been enhanced, particularly at the provincial level, allowing congresses to adopt local regulations at and above the county level.

Administrative relationships

The characteristics of the administrative context in China are inherently structured towards centralized decision-making and bureaucratic control. The systems and procedures, far from being reformed, are deeply entrenched, and roles, responsibilities and relationships are structured towards maintaining the status quo and fulfilling bureaucratic interests. Recent attempts, made within the LGOP and various government departments, to remove administrative blockages through reorganization have been less than successful.[20]

Strict functional hierarchies A fundamental characteristic of the administration of rural development is the adherence to strict functional hierarchies. The forestry sector, for instance, is administered through a hierarchy of five levels of government from State Council to township.[21]

> *'This hierarchical system of administration fosters an approach to forestry development that is top down in its planning, project formulation and implementation, and stands in contrast to the characteristics of community participation. The mandate of each level of forestry authority does not lend itself to community participation, but implicitly favours a process of answering to upper levels of the forestry authority and governmental administrators.'* [22]

Projects implemented in this environment have been characterized by 'little co-ordination among horizontal and vertical government agencies, low efficiency, financial black holes, improper use of natural resources and low participation'.[23] Systems of meetings and the execution of official orders are used for resource planning, distribution, monitoring and evaluation. Upper levels of government control the behaviour of officials and institutions, and conversely officials only respond to superiors. Even where change is envisaged and institutionalized at higher levels of government, it takes a great deal more time to create this change at lower levels of government.

Departmentalization (Compartmentalization) Administrative problems therefore arise from the strict hierarchical structures characteristic of most line departments but also the strict division between the functions of sectoral departments such as the departments of Forestry, Water Resources, Agriculture or Health. As a result, inter-agency or inter-departmental cooperation is minimal: all projects seem to raise this as one of the key risks to successful implementation. Despite innumerable efforts towards multi-agency task forces, steering committees and the like, this rigorous departmental demarcation remains a serious blockage to effective poverty reduction and the targeting of poor groups through sectoral interventions. This lack of integration means that policy and processes such as participation, differing markedly from conventional approaches, might be being implemented by one department, but not another.

The structural separation of roles and responsibilities into strictly defined departments at all levels of government, the lack of cooperation between these departments and the strong and primary commitment of these departments to their own agendas all stand as key administrative constraints on the successful development of participatory approaches. Departmental boundaries are manifest at all levels of government. The Department of Forestry, for instance, has representatives at the village, township, county, prefecture and provincial levels, as well as within the national ministry. There is little merging of departments at the local level. Some townships have over 30 departments represented.

Some county officials argue that these departmental silos are broken down at the local level. But at the lower levels of government, too, it is noticeable officials report to two masters – their line managers within their sectoral department and to the administration of the county or township government in which they are based. Unger argues that the dual control over staff is a hangover from the

Maoist period that required the control of both the state and the local Party over the activities of officials.[24] The structure of organizational arrangements is aimed first at maintaining the status quo and pursuing bureaucratic interest, and only second towards the pursuit of project objectives. Officials involved in participatory activities often find themselves working under conflicting institutions and leaderships.

In the implementation of the CPAP, the LGOP has recognized this as a critical issue, and a joint working group for participatory poverty alleviation is under consideration that will include the State Development Planning Commission, the Ministry of Finance and the Agricultural Bank of China. Despite efforts such as this, the silo nature of development projects remains a primary blockage to development and to achieving a convergence of efforts for poverty reduction. For impoverished farmers this means they may be pulled in many directions and be the subjects of very different policies and approaches emanating from different departments. For local-level technical officials such as extension officers who interface with these farmers, the situation is equally difficult and ultimately its resolution requires structural change at the highest levels of government. Local-level efforts can bring about only a limited degree of coordination.

In the Sino-German Afforestation Project (Chapter 5), at the donor request, a project steering committee was formed at the local level to coordinate the roles, responsibilities and relationships of the various departments. This proved unsuccessful as government departments and representatives remained within their silos and resisted attempts at coordination.[25]

Administrative responsibilities

Financing and planning Funding constraints are created by the regulations, procedures and administrative responsibilities of the institutions involved in sectoral activity and poverty reduction. Bringing about change to these structural constraints is impossible at project level. The openness towards the participation of farmers in decisions that affect them – suggested in rhetoric and policy statements – is still a long way from changing administrations that, by their nature and activity, block such approaches. The ways in which funding constraints operate can be illustrated by looking briefly at the current system of poverty reduction funds management.

Funding for poverty reduction has two sources: the central government budget and the budgets of local governments at various levels. Of the 100 billion yuan spent on poverty reduction in 1980–2000, 80 billion was provided by the central government.[26] Based on regulations passed by the State Council in 1997, provincial matching funds are now supposed to vary in the range 30–50 per cent, but such levels are rarely attained. At the subnational level, the largest proportion of funds comes from provincial governments. County governments contribute relatively little, particularly when they are poor counties.[27] It is extremely difficult for most of China's 592 officially designated poor counties to provide funds, simply because they have a very weak revenue base and often run substantial deficits. Consequently, they rely on financial subsidies and tax-turned investments from higher government levels. This promotes a strong financial dependency,

reinforced by counties having to apply upwards for funding, and being clearly directed in how the funds are used by the provincial government. Since the system also experienced some misuse of funds in the 1990s, control was strengthened during this period. Local governments often used poverty reduction funds for economic development rather than, more directly, for poverty reduction. For example, as outlined in the case study of the forestry sector, the lack of administrative authority of the State Forestry Administration (SFA) is reinforced by a lack of control over finances at the local level. Funding is accumulated from the SFA as well as the local treasury and from direct revenue that local forestry agencies earn from taxation and local charges. This means that agencies have money to spend, ostensibly on recurrent costs, but in practice they use this finance to give themselves leverage. Many have tended to generate more funds through the creative interpretation of laws and regulations to provide opportunities for improving the financial capacity (and therefore the status) of their institutions and for informal payments to individuals. The initial response of central government to such situations was to impose more rigorous control from above. From 1999 onwards, however, it began to be realized that this response was largely unsuccessful and, as we noted earlier, the Ministry of Finance has begun to use participatory methods instrumentally to try and ensure that funds 'find their way to villages and households'.[28]

Currently, there are a number of different methods for the allocation of poverty reduction funds. The central government can allocate funding to counties in blocks of one or more payments. Alternatively, funding can be provided for specific projects, when the design and method of implementation have been agreed at the county level. Finally, funds can be given directly to provincial departments and poverty reduction agencies for the direct funding of projects. In this financial system, it remains the case that higher levels of government exercise control through financial dependence and through the structure of roles and responsibilities.

Finance thus remains a key constraining factor on the replication and sustainability of participatory approaches outside the isolated 'project' context.[29] At the root of the problem is the mechanism through which funds, once allocated, are dispersed. In poverty reduction, for example, an annual development plan for each poverty county is developed by the LGOP office (without any serious grassroots participation). This is subject to review and approval by the Agricultural Bank of China, and can only be financed when approved in scope and content – down to the very last detail. Targeted groups and households are then involved in the 'doing' phase of a predetermined project design. This restricts the development of 'process' projects in which the poor can make or change decisions and amend project objectives as capacity develops. As a result, the current planning system does not support village-based planning. Recent legislation for the free election of village committees, described above, creates space for the creation of a planning body in the village that could operate on a participatory basis (such as that envisaged in the CPAP process), but the mechanisms for linking that back into county plans are still untested outside the protected pilot context.

Staffing In addition to the basic structure of the administrative set-up and the financing procedures for all expenditure, higher levels of government also have

some control over staffing and staffing strategies. The problems associated with staff capacity and other human resource issues are detailed in Chapter 11. The purpose of this discussion is to highlight the parameters within which the local levels of government work, and specifically to consider how the allocation of responsibilities to different levels of administration affects local government's pursuit of participatory processes.

One of the obvious problems of decentralized management processes such as that inherent in the participatory approach is that delegation of responsibility is rarely matched with the staffing competency necessary to produce the best results. If the capacity of local-level staff is a critical issue, so is the reality that control over local staff, whatever their capacity, often lies in the hands of higher-level officials.

The transfer and rotation of staff becomes a significant issue when capacity has been built – but often lies outside local control. Officials are moved around repeatedly, township officials within the county, and county officials within the prefecture or province. Not only does this mean that the resources ploughed into training officials in participation can disappear at the signing of a transfer order, but it creates a lack of ownership and commitment amongst officials who know that they may soon move on. Officials are thus thought to work by the adage 'look for half a year, work for half a year, then get out of here'.[30]

Administrative functions affecting participation

A number of sector-specific issues also affect participation. These include:

Land management The participation of households in agriculture, forestry and other local-level development initiatives is affected by the issue of land or property use and management. Under Chinese law, land is owned by the village or in some cases by the village group (the former production brigade in the collective) or the township. The village is responsible for allocating the land for farming by households. Recently, the government has proposed that legal security of tenure on such contracted land be extended from 15 years to 30 years. In itself, the present system does not have a major effect on agricultural cultivation, and currently there are no significant pressures for privatization from farmers. However, what does concern farming households is the way in which village leaders often reallocate land before contracts expire. Leaders can do this for many reasons, but it is usually in response to changing demographic conditions in villages, or to enable major shifts in local development strategy (such as the reallocation of land for commercial use). This situation leads to widespread insecurity amongst farmers, and the absence of rights to security of tenure also prevents farmers from using land as collateral and limits their access to credit markets. Recent empirical studies have suggested that improved security of tenure would improve the investments and output of farming households.[31] Greater involvement by farmers and their representatives in decisions on land use and distribution through the work of village committees or assemblies would be important in reducing land insecurity, and in the longer run it would give farmers greater confidence to transfer user rights to other households, if they so wished.

Taxation In the budget of a typical Chinese county, 40–45 per cent is spent on social services, 25–30 per cent on administration, and 10–15 per cent on capital expenditure. The budget is drawn up and revenues and expenditures decided by the township and county governments in consultation with village committees. One of the most difficult budgetary problems for these governments during the reform period has been how to fund the growing number of services, infrastructure maintenance and development, and the capital needed for village communities. Many of them have been unable to achieve the requisite funding and, as noted earlier, have gone heavily into debt. This has been the case particularly with China's poor counties. Consequently, more and more farming households have had to pay for their families' healthcare and education, as local funds are inadequate. However, this situation also means that local governments are forever trying to find ways of increasing revenues, with the result that they increase the financial burden on farming households. Consequently, since the early 1980s, extra budgetary funds and funds self-raised by county and township governments have been increasing. One recent estimate puts these at 30 per cent of total funds at the township level. The heavy burden of taxes and levies is a source of deep resentment amongst Chinese farmers, and is exacerbated by their arbitrariness, their regressive structure and by the lack of transparency in decisions relating to fund-raising and expenditure in general.

In many poor counties, the system has also resulted in farmer income levies being used to finance non-agricultural enterprise, in the hope that they will generate rapid increases in profits. The levies have also been earmarked as funds to assist local enterprises overcome downturns in sector activity. This has placed an additional burden on farmers and the failure to discuss the utilization of the levies has created ill-feeling at the local level. This is currently a serious constraint on participatory endeavours.

Community and Individual Factors Affecting Participation

The role of village organizations

With the growing importance of VCs and their potential for improving levels of participation, it is important to clarify what, exactly, these committees do. What are their responsibilities in relation to the village community? The Organic Law gives VCs responsibility to 'manage the public affairs and public welfare services of the village, mediate disputes among the villagers, and assist in the maintenance of public order'; to 'support and organize villagers in cooperative economic undertakings'; to 'administer affairs concerning land and other property owned collectively by the villagers'; and to devise 'rules and regulations for the village' covering all aspects of village life.[32]

As can be seen in the case studies, VCs implement state directives, mediate disputes, provide welfare services, and maintain order. They also act as general contractors, however, establishing and helping to establish new companies and reallocating land to companies from farmers who no longer wish to undertake

cultivation activities. They play an important role in allocating jobs in both state and collective sectors. They also provide information to farmers on market access, and here the VCs play an important role in brokering contacts with middlemen outside the village. In recent years, as we have already noted, committees have assumed a crucial role in the delivery of social and welfare services, and, where possible, in the raising of extra-budgetary levies.

In addition to the trio of village committee, representative assembly and Party branch, decision-making in China's villages is also influenced, in some cases powerfully, by other groups. We have seen in Chapter 2 that these are traditional political organizations (such as the Women's Federation), social organizations, such as leading village entrepreneurs, families with a traditional village power base, and groups based on kinship networks.

In assessing the political influence of such village organizations and groups, it is important to recall that, although their influence may be growing, they still remain constrained in most areas by the authority of the township. Township leaders are concerned that VCs may gain too much autonomy, and that they will no longer be able to rely on them to carry out township directives and orders. The relationship with the township level often puts VC members in a difficult position. They are caught between the township above and the farmers below, but in a situation where local power has been strengthened in recent years. Anxious not to lose local support, trying not to implement policies that will alienate them from the village households, and with an eye on local income generation, committee members are becoming increasingly wary and questioning of township demands. Yet, formally they cannot ignore or reject township directives except under exceptional circumstances. This political dynamic is an important element of the current context and the potential for participation in many of China's villages.

Community leadership

Several of the case studies stress the importance of village leadership in developing support for participation at the village level – as illustrated, for example, in the introduction of participatory methods into village planning, or the extension of community forestry management. In the Natural Resources study, villagers in Da Maha present very clear ideas on the qualities of leadership required to improve participation.[33] Both this and recent studies of village leaders stress the importance of issues such as trust, cooperation and negotiating skills. In recent participatory research on farmer initiatives in villages in Hebei Province, villagers were asked to rank what they considered to be the most important attributes of village leaders. One well-supported attribute was *the ability to get things done with the help of others*. On a more general level, they stressed leaders' *recognition of mutual interests*, *fulfilling one's promises*, *being generous*, and *having good technical expertise*. However, the primary attribute was *honesty* which was usually coupled with *trust*. Maintaining good relations with villagers, and obtaining cooperation from them could best be achieved by leaders with these two qualities, combined with 'fulfilling what one has promised'.[34]

The emphasis placed on such qualities highlights the problems for community leadership in the present context. Villagers are repeatedly visited by officials who, like leaders, promise to deliver improvements in cultivation, social conditions and living standards. Often these are not forthcoming, but it is local leaders who have to live with the results of this, rather than distant township or provincial officials. Similarly, leaders still have to implement unpopular policies from above, and often can do little about this. The raising of extra-budgetary levies cannot be a transparent process, implemented under present policies. So, whilst village leaders are being called upon to be more open and democratic in some areas, in most areas it is still difficult for them to operate in such ways. Hence, when they do so, their actions are valued by villagers, who subsequently stress the values required for greater openness and reliability in decision-making.

Culture, values and tradition

The influence of Chinese culture is critical for the types of participation developed to date and foreseeable in the future. Any change toward participation as a key mechanism in decision-making at the grass-roots level will be influenced by the cultural traditions and values of the people. These are deeply rooted and a project of a few years is unlikely to bring about fundamental change.

The history of feudal and centralized systems in China has created a set of values in which people are accustomed to and expect to be organized by government. However, Chinese history is also characterized by a long tradition of rebellion and protest against overbearing and oppressive governments, in which the 'right to rebel' is sanctioned when governments fail to meet the basic requirements of the people. These twin traditions are often favoured in historical analysis, but soon prove inadequate when faced with the diversity of the histories of China's peoples and regions.

In analysing the influence of culture on participation, we need to examine specific areas of culture. To many farmers, for example, participation in decision-making is equated with participation in ratifying decisions made elsewhere, often for the benefit of others – as was the case with much of the 'participation' characteristic of the years of the Cultural Revolution. Additionally, 'participation' is discredited through its association with mobilization of village labour for infrastructure projects. We also need to ask why, for example, despite many of the improvements made in the position of women since 1949, a culture celebrating the return of women into the home is now to be found increasingly in many areas.[35] Similarly, we need to understand how the culture of respect for the Chinese Communist Party is grounded in the government and Party's ability to deliver dramatic improvements in rural people's lives since 1949. Any attempt at extending participation at the village level has to recognize and work within this culture, otherwise it stands little chance of success. Again, as we have noted, there is a particular culture through which villagers define leaders who are worthy of respect. There are also important cultural influences based on family and kinship, or emanating from traditional village networks. The indigenous knowledge of China's minority peoples has important cultural resonance for the development of participation.

Household, family and kinship networks

The development of the household responsibility system during the reform years has created new responsibilities, opportunities and demands for farming families. It has also affected household size, structure and relations with family and kin. Each of these factors affects the capacity and willingness of households to participate in development initiatives.

The household is the basic unit of domestic organization in Chinese villages – 'the group of kin relations distinguished by a single kitchen, a common budget, and, normally, although not necessarily, co-residence'.[36] Members of peasant households usually use the term 'household' for family members who are co-resident, and 'family' for closely related members of different households. The post-collective removal of constraints on family income generation has intensified demands on the household, resulting from a continual diversification into new activities – extending field cultivation, cultivating new crops, employment in village enterprises, developing small-scale enterprises, and hiring labour. This has resulted in a redistribution of roles within the household, with all family members being pressed into boosting household income. In most areas, to women's 'double burden' of household and agricultural work has been added demands for involvement in part-time work in rural industries, and grandparents and school children have been persuaded both to work in the fields and seek off-farm employment.

This resulted, particularly in the late 1980s and early 1990, in increasing school drop-out rates, particularly for young teenage girls. Overall, however, it has meant that households have become more and more concerned with each member's individual responsibilities, with their contribution to family income and with the amount of time spent on each activity. 'Time is money' is an increasingly influential value, and time available for involvement in other village activities is consequently reduced. This is affecting participation in decision-making and may be a major reason why we have seen through recent research that there is less interest in participation in village committees in more affluent villages.[37] Pressure of work also makes it more difficult for women to participate.

The need to sustain income generation is also having an effect on the household in another major area. Reinforced by the requirements of the one child (or at most two children) family policy, there is intense pressure on the family to recruit daughters-in-law for their sons. This is not only to ensure care in old age (given the decline of welfare services), but also to increase labour power. The pressure is particularly intense when a child has died or a daughter has been lost in marriage to another household. Despite legal prohibition, high bride prices are still paid, and the recruitment of a daughter-in-law requires considerable family saving. Marriages are being arranged at increasingly younger ages. Substantial time, worry and money are being devoted to obtaining brides, to the detriment of other activities, and to the disadvantage of poor families who often cannot afford the bride price.

In most areas, Chinese rural households have become smaller in size during the reform years. Average family size is 3–4 persons, although it is higher in minority areas: 5–6 in Yunnan and Guangxi Provinces, for example. Accompanying this trend to smaller households is a further trend – one in which these smaller

households increasingly cooperate with other kin-related households. Croll has aptly termed this process 'aggregation',[38] through which kin-related households, previously divided, come together or combine jointly to invest in and develop income-generating activities. The bases for aggregation are mostly kinship, proximity of residence and mobilization of resources to meet new demands on the household. The kinship links are generally, though not always, based on patrilineal ties.

As noted earlier, this process has been assisted by government policies urging farming households both to pool their savings to invest in common assets to improve cultivation, processing and marketing, and to organize welfare provision. Consequently, a considerable amount of time is spent by households on developing and extending kinship ties. The creation of more general social networks is also important, not only as an adjunct to the kinship system, but particularly in areas where this system cannot be used, or is not available. In participatory appraisals undertaken recently in Guangxi, Yunnan and Ningxia provinces,[39] the importance of networking for cooperation was considered crucial for most families in providing access to food security, credit, support and emergency relief. Families were prepared to incur debt to finance the 'three ceremonies' – birthdays, weddings and funerals – since this was vital in maintaining village social relations. Significantly, the poorest and most vulnerable families were those without strong kin or social networks. In addition to kin and social networks, it also seems that lineages and clans are beginning to take up again their former, pre-collective roles as local organizers of services and welfare. Village and ancestral temples are re-emerging as important hubs in local social networks. In some villages, alternatives to the political authority of the VC have been developed by the institution of a lineage and its ancestral hall.

For instance, an alternative village authority emerged in Dachuan in Gansu Province, where a village of people surnamed Kong, with a documented descent from Confucius, rebuilt the Confucian Temple and its management, which then became the locus for effective village leadership. The temple and its management committee became a base from which was engineered the removal of the village Party secretary, who had opposed the temple as a 'feudal superstition'. Subsequently, it was the base for further manoeuvres, using county government connections to defend the temple and its successful nursery school against threats by other government cadres to close it.[40]

In addition to cultural and traditional factors, *individual* factors affecting participation are those that relate to the household and the individual farmer – and can be addressed by strengthening human capital and providing support to those less well educated, healthy and able within the community. Influencing factors include characteristics of each household and person: education and literacy, economic status and employment, skills, ethnicity and gender. The case studies provide glimpses of these problems, as described below.

Ethnicity

The problems of ethnic minorities[41] in China and their poverty when compared with the Han Chinese are well documented. To a great extent the issues that affect the involvement of minority groups in participatory decision-making processes

reflect more general development problems cited elsewhere. These include, for instance, the marginalization of minority groups in mountainous unproductive land – the majority living in the southwestern and western regions. In 2000, for example, 10 per cent of the poor population of China lived in Yunnan Province, and 80 per cent of the province's poor are from minority groups. Human development indicators reflect this relative poverty: the maternal mortality rate for Yunnan is 134 per 100,000 births, almost twice the national rural average. Provincial illiteracy rates are amongst the highest in China: the female illiteracy rate is 66 per cent (compared with the national average of 38 per cent), whilst male illiteracy is 29 per cent (compared with the national average of 16 per cent).[42]

These 'residual' poor were marginalized from the gains of economic growth in the 1980s. Typically these poor communities structure their livelihoods around resource-deficient land. Poor soil quality, widespread erosion and an ongoing lack of water relentlessly result in low yields; and typically these remote areas have inadequate basic infrastructure, access roads, limited market opportunities, and limited or non-existent social services. Environmental instability and fragility and resultant natural disasters have stripped the poor of their asset base.

The relative poverty of ethnic minorities in China and their habitation of potentially unstable border areas, as well as their perceived role in environmental protection, have resulted in a large number of donor-led projects being focused in areas where the problems of ethnic minorities are prioritized. The work of the Ford Foundation in the nature reserves of Yunnan (described in Chapter 6) is a case in point. It is in these projects that donors slowly started the introduction of Western concepts of participation, and as a result there is no lack of information about the influence of ethnicity in participation.

Closely associated with the groups inhabiting remote mountainous terrain is a traditional understanding of farming and forests.

> *'The indigenous people of Yunnan have lived in harmony with their environment for many generations. They have developed a range of methods for managing natural resources based on their own distinctive perceptions and sophisticated local knowledge. Many mountains, landscapes and sites are regarded as sacred by different ethnic groups.'*[43]

Indigenous knowledge and its use in the development of participatory projects that meet the needs of the farmers is therefore central to any discussion on ethnicity. Indeed, it can be argued that the process in which farmers impart indigenous knowledge into projects is a cornerstone for participation, an entry point and an important determining factor affecting the success of participatory endeavours. In the case of Da Maha in Gen Ma County in Yunnan, for example, where livelihood strategies are threatened by environmental degradation and other negative external factors, villagers, and women particularly, have a close relationship to the forests, provide most of the labour, and practise traditional forest management.[44]

The cultural customs and ways of life of minority nationalities are critical to the way participatory planning and poverty reduction activities are carried out. Experience suggests that in the context of China, special attention needs to be given to local languages (teams visiting villages should include members fluent in

the local languages and dialects); diet (understanding the customs of minority peoples when facilitators and officials from outside the villages are in the area); religion (awareness of the significance and impact of religious holidays and other nationality holidays); and other traditions (eg, special requirements for men and women to participate separately in discussion groups – particularly with regard to Muslim populations).

Gender

In resource-deficient areas of China, groups whose practices marginalize women to the greatest extent are generally the poorest groups. Gender dimensions of poverty are acknowledged, but are not revealed in detail through statistics or in government sectoral or multisectoral poverty reduction responses. The status of women amongst the so-called minorities is lower than for Han people, but also varies with custom. The most visible indicator highlighting gender biases is found in customs favouring boys' education.[45] As a consequence, female illiteracy is more than twice male illiteracy in many minority groups. This has a significant effect on the potential involvement of women in development initiatives.

One of the most pressing needs for women's participation is that they suffer more from heavy workloads and insanitary conditions in water-deficient areas. The severe deterioration of women's health is a primary cause of distress amongst women, yet rarely are these concerns heard. Male participation does not provide this information. Gender awareness amongst participating officials is generally very weak.

It is commonly held that gender is a significant factor influencing participation and this is supported by evidence and experience in China. The differing perspectives of men and women inevitably bring about differing inputs into the decision-making process. The increasing feminization of agriculture in China has not necessarily brought with it an increase in decision-making. The shift in the role of women is toward the provision of labour, and this is not necessarily accompanied by any increased status (except perhaps where women are able to establish their income-earning potential and achieve a higher social status by first achieving a higher economic status). Instances of situations where women's concerns are sidelined are plentiful. The common practice is that men are given opportunities to undertake training and women acquire knowledge indirectly – a process of sub-transfer in which a great deal of information is lost or misunderstood.[46]

As elsewhere, evidence shows that tradition dictates women's roles, and there is generally a precedent for men to make the decisions outside the home (including any external development initiatives), despite the fact that it is often the women who are primarily involved in these activities. When implementing projects with participatory objectives, it is essential for local governments to acknowledge gender roles as well as the complexities of gender biases and the impact of traditional values. As well as their onerous domestic and child-care roles, women generally have responsibility for livestock, light agricultural labour, the production of organic fertilizers and the collection of water and firewood,. In some areas, minority groups in particular rely on women to manage household

finances. The men undertake ploughing and collection of non-timber forest products (NTFP), as well as some firewood collection and house rebuilding. Women bring in 40–50 per cent of the household income, and carry the heaviest workloads of agricultural, household and child-rearing responsibilities.

The exception to this prevalent gender situation in the group of case studies undertaken is Da Maha. In Dai society, households are headed by women and they make decisions for the families as well as working in the fields, collecting firewood, working outside the village and controlling household finances. Consequently they have been the primary participants in the community forestry management project – 70 per cent of participants in village meetings are women.

The incidence of female-headed households (divorced, abandoned, widowed women) does not appear to be as significant in China as in many other low-income countries. It is increasing, however, and is most common where male out-migration patterns have taken hold. In some areas, it also appears to be affecting patterns of land use, with female households being persuaded to allow male relatives access to land in return for assistance during the husband's time away from the village.[47] In parts of northwest China such as Inner Mongolia there is a pattern of excluding female-headed households from projects, since they cannot contribute labour.[48]

Women also suffer from a pronounced lack of access to information about livelihoods. While at least one woman representative is expected to sit on each VC, the position is without status or power. At the township levels of government, officials are male and development processes are male-dominated, reflecting both institutional and social norms. Women do not participate in public meetings or decision-making. The attendance of men only at meetings where development interventions are discussed also creates misunderstanding and a relaying of incorrect information.

The primary vehicle for women's interaction with the government and accessing information is the All-China Women's Federation, discussed in Chapter 2. Formally, it is a channel of information for policy and party politics, and is practically (if not officially) associated with birth control policy. However, it also provides important literacy education, vocational training skills and health education for women. As noted earlier, in many projects it attempts to provide increased access to decision-making for women.

China's Agenda 21 (the 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) initiative) calls for specific action to promote the role of women in sustainable development processes, and sets out specific objectives to remove constraints hindering women's participation in these.[49] In order to bring about structural change, it is vital that the participation of women is achieved at the policy-making level and that women in rural areas are encouraged to participate in ecological conservation and the rural economy. Participatory approaches are needed that take into account the practical and strategic needs of women and monitor the achievement of objectives. Activities should be aimed at improving information, policy and legislation, local-level strategies, policy implementation, gender awareness, improved healthcare for women, elimination of literacy and improved access to education.

In relation to resettlement, in theory and by law[50] women have the same rights as men in political, economic, social and family areas of life, as well as with regard to assets compensation, land for housing and farming, employment and, notably, participation in public affairs. Yet in practice their involvement is limited, and varies to some extent as tradition dictates. There is no proactive regulation of their involvement, and little attention is given to issues of particular concern to them. The collective compensation fund is beyond their reach, but tradition dictates a particular focus on the construction of the house.

The case studies also reveal that there has been little experience in developing specific and targeted events in which women can articulate their views and enter the process of decision-making. Their lower education, piecemeal time, shyness and lack of communication skills with outsiders are rarely addressed through training initiatives. Training services are male-oriented and difficult for women to access.[51] In the participatory land-use planning of the Sino-German Afforestation Project described in Chapter 5, women's participation in decision-making and field activities is as low as 25 per cent. One of the key reasons for the lack of women's participation is the lack of space and place for their views to be heard. Building block approaches[52] such as those developed elsewhere are as appropriate to the Chinese context as they are in South Asia or Latin America. Any notion that women might lead the participatory process for neighbourhood development, as developed in Kerala and replicated in India in the 1990s, is implausible.

Women's participation in the planning, design and implementation of projects can contribute significantly to empowerment, can promote gender equality, and can also help to ensure that interventions are appropriate to the needs of the whole community. The improved economic status of women tends to improve their role within the household. But care should be taken here, since the work load of poor women in China is already excessive, and projects would do well to acknowledge this. Whilst women's participation in development activities is essential, it can also increase their burden. Support and recognition – in the form of child care, the timing of meetings, allowing more than one member per household, equal pay for equal work, etc – are all important mechanisms to improve and rebalance participation.

Key issues in relation to women in Chinese villages are their homogeneity on one hand and their heterogeneity on the other. Many poor women from the same group with the same cultural and socio-economic influences will have similar needs and behave in similar ways. At the same time, many women will be from another socio-economic group or a minority with different customs. They may be more vocal, and have greater capacity to participate. Some will have a voice or perhaps dominate other women, marginalizing those with lower status and education from the participatory process.

Education and literacy

While there is some debate over the degree of education necessary for poor households to participate meaningfully, evidence from the case studies in rural poor communities all suggests that the levels of education and literacy within

project villages affect both community and individual willingness and ability to participate. Clearly, illiterate villagers, and women in particular, must not be marginalized from the process and the need to include the illiterate is critical in the targeting of participatory development interventions. The use of PRA tools by skilled facilitators has proved very successful in a number of participatory projects with tribal minorities in China. In the CPAP case (see Chapter 10), for example, women were drawn into the process when they were supported and encouraged by project consultants appointed for this purpose. The need for effective facilitation arose repeatedly as a primary component of successful participatory initiatives with less-educated groups.

Of course the availability of community workers with facilitation skills and the viability of replicating high levels of support is a significant issue not yet addressed in China. In many cases, the issue of the language of the facilitators is critical – as a large majority of the poorest groups do not speak the language of those with the facilitating skills. In the case of Da Maha[53] mentioned above, women participants were very keen on outside facilitators that brought with them new experiences and perspectives.

The issue of literacy and education, then, is closely linked to that of gender biases, and women are frequently discriminated against as participants because they are less educated. There are numerous examples of men from the community being given opportunities for skill development and trained in activities predominately carried out by women. In the World Bank forestry project in Jinping mentioned above, officials were well aware of gender roles in relation to tree planting, but because they saw the women as illiterate and uneducated, it was the men that they trained in fruit tree pruning. This was discriminatory against both women and the illiterate, and ignored the fact that this was traditionally a women's activity. In the same project, written contracts formed the basis of user participation. These were not always well understood and in any case farmers did not believe that a contract could protect their interests.

The importance of literacy is a particular issue in the more formalized resettlement projects illustrated in the cases of Xiaolangdi and Hexi in Chapter 7. Without being able to read the basic documents, they rely on others to explain the process and its implications, and they hesitate to become involved in discussions. Typically, the more educated members of a village such as teachers and doctors, as well as traditional elders and village leaders, will become the key stakeholders in the process of resettlement, some looking out for the interests of the community as a whole. In addition, some degree of education is required to understand resettlement policy, compensation and its implications.

A colourful example of the efforts that can be made to encourage participation by illiterate villagers is the case of Xiaolangdi. To reach women, the director of the Yunlin village women's association became skilled in disseminating resettlement policy through a form of popular theatre. She chose women villagers to form a troupe named *zhuang hu* to act out a drama called 'Leaving homeland during resettlement'. The drama was performed in eight villages. Its theme draws on real people and events, and moves many villagers to tears. In this way, villagers, particularly women with little education, learnt about land acquisition and policy.

Economic status and employment

Typically, households with a higher economic status have a higher standing within the community and participate to a greater extent, as they have a stronger voice, but in China this is not always reflected at the village level. Ogden notes that wealthier villages are not always going to be more democratic[54] – sometimes less so – and by extension these may be slower to inculcate participatory processes that draw in all members of the community.

At the same time, too, employment can limit the amount of time an individual or family has to participate. While many may be enthusiastic to play a central role in forestry management, for instance, the necessity for intensive seasonal work and the winter labour migration of many men has meant that more impoverished households, and especially those where women carry the extra burden, do not have the time or energy to take on the responsibility of forest management.[55]

The case studies highlight a few specific issues on employment and economic status in relation to participation, for example that in resettlement schemes a wealthier household may stand to lose more than a poorer neighbour, and may be driven to become more involved in the process;[56] that migration is affecting participation – in many cases, employed (male) family members will be absent from home for long periods and the remaining household members will be responsible for production and matters in the village; and that there is often gender discrimination in employment opportunities and remuneration (two female days equal one male day, or a lower salary for equal work).

Tools for addressing the imbalance created by differing economic status and employment conditions include the provision of skills training and the development of opportunities for the unemployed in relation to project activities. Some of these may focus on women and youth, for instance, for whom income-earning activities can act as an important launchpad for participation and strengthen their capacity to become involved in other activities.

Skills and knowledge

In the context of China today, there are few communities that possess instinctive skills and knowledge of participatory processes. The participatory concept is fraught with precedent and suspicion built up over decades of top-down rule and shifting mass mobilization under successive communist policies. Communities need to develop these skills and become familiar with interactions between village committees and government officials. There is no question that this requires confidence building, since current decision-making is often dominated by the more articulate. There is also the problem of greater imbalance, as the necessary skills are acquired by men and not women, by the younger and not the elderly, etc. Greater experience in participation brings more capacity and more meaning to the process.

At the same time, though, many farmers possess extensive skills in relation to their work – in the forests, in agricultural production, in relation to irrigated farming, and so on. This technical knowledge – modern farming techniques or indigenous knowledge, or both – is a crucial resource in the communities and one that must play a central part in the development of participation. Acknowledging

the contribution of farmers and drawing on this knowledge in the development of projects is a key means towards the development of appropriate and relevant interventions. Those projects that have drawn on indigenous knowledge in forestry management, for instance, have proved very successful in terms of both outcomes and the sustainability of community management processes.

Willingness to participate

The factors discussed above determine not only effective or ineffective participatory outcomes, but also, through a complex interaction of factors, a community's willingness to participate. Some are explicitly recognized, as seen in the following examples.

In the Cao Hai nature reserve management project, villagers were empowered to the degree that they decided whether or not to participate in what they saw as an externally led project. They made their decisions based on whether:

- they could see a tangible benefit to themselves;
- they really could make decisions – or whether they would be led;
- the tenure arrangements were clear; and
- there were any areas of conflict.

In the case of community forestry management in Sichuan, before participating, the villagers were concerned to see that:

- the allocation of benefits was conducted in a transparent manner;
- national policy would affect the project;
- local levels of government had the capacity to implement the project; and that
- there would be outside facilitation to ensure that the participation was meaningful.

Local Processes Affecting Participation

In looking at the processes of participation at the local and village levels, it is important to focus on the means for developing participation, examining the interface between local government and institutions to see what the main vehicles or instruments for participation are and examining their effect on the participation that is/can be developed. This is essential – those factors that constrain or enable the development of the interface between local government and village participants are at the centre of the process.

In the Chinese context, the main vehicles for participation can be divided into the following organizations and groups:

- county and township levels of government;
- local agency representatives;
- village committees (VCs);

- village Party branches;
- traditional village groups;
- village associations; and
- the village community itself.

Participation can be enhanced by improving the capacity of these groups and organizations, and by bringing in third partners to help effect the partnership. In many cases documented in this book, the role of external support agents such as donors and research institutes has been critical.

The following section develops further the roles of these formal and informal institutions and groups at the village level and the nature of the interface of the partnership.[57] First, it addresses the formal governmental side of the interface: the ways in which local government relates to village decision-making bodies, and especially the village committee and Party branch. The section then goes on to examine the ways in which the village community interacts both with local decision-making bodies, and with the institutions of local government. The concluding section considers the role of donors, research and development practitioner organizations, in their relations with the village community and local government.

The interface between local government and village organizations

County, township governments, and local politics

In most developing countries, the development of participatory approaches in welfare, service delivery and poverty reduction is heavily influenced by the ways in which local government interfaces with the village community. The skills and capacity of government officials working with communities are extremely important in the development and sustaining of participation. Officials can build relations with communities, mobilize villagers and create links with sectors of local government.

In China, county and township governments and their departments exercise considerable power over decision-making in the village. They are at the base of the formal political structure, and are the indispensable links between the village and formal political authority. The level immediately above the village is the township. China currently has 44,741 townships, each of which has approximately 20,000 residents and is responsible for an average of 20 villages. The township is governed by the township Party committee, the township people's government, and the township people's congress. Leaders of these three centres of power are chosen in different ways. The township Party secretary is appointed by the Party committee, but the head and deputy heads of the township government are elected by township people's congress deputies, who in turn are directly elected by township residents. These three centres of power – committee, government, and congress – are also repeated at the county level, which, in turn, directs and oversees the township.

In most areas, and particularly in the all-important area of finance, villages are wholly dependent upon the county and township, and officials at these levels

view villages as subordinate. In important areas of poverty reduction, villages have to bid to local governments for funds. Dependence is promoted through a hierarchical system in which greater status and respect is accorded to officials the closer they are to the centre of local government.

For most villagers, contact with formal government occurs only via township officials. These officials have to undertake a range of tasks assigned to them by their counterparts at the county level. Some of these tasks are extremely unpopular with villagers. An example is one of the staff issues we take up in Chapter 11, that of township officials who are responsible for collecting taxes and fees, and implementing birth control policies. Villagers regularly accuse township officials of using excessive coercion in collecting dues.[58]

> *'In the late 1980s and early 1990s, the problem of many township officials ruling like "local emperors" worsened to an extent that senior Party leaders like Peng Zhen began to worry that peasants might soon attack rural cadres "with their shoulder poles".'*[59]

The interface between local government and the village occurs in a number of ways. County and township officials and staff work with villagers on specific projects in the field. Teams of staff from different sectors visit the village. Senior officials in management roles meet with villagers and their leaders in structured meetings. Village leaders and representatives travel to local government offices for meetings, to make reports, and to receive directives for implementation. A key problem for the development of participation is the attitude to it by both township and county officials, generally ranging from indifference to hostility.

The interface of county and township government departments with villages is characterized by stereotyped views and organizational practices that are not conducive to participation. This reflects not only the serious lack of capacity of township officials (particularly their discriminatory attitudes towards the poor) but also compartmentalized administrative arrangements that create marked disincentive for change. In recent years, however, counties have been influenced by provincial officials championing the cause of participation for poverty reduction. This has occurred in provinces such as Gansu and Yunnan, where officials have played an important role in persuading county staff to establish an effective interface with VCs and villagers to introduce participatory methods in planning. They have organized workshops, and visited counties and villages, organizing meetings to persuade officials of the importance of adopting participatory approaches. In addition, with the recent interest in participation from above, combined with the adoption of participatory approaches by influential provincial officials, these views and practices are beginning to change, as noted in such examples as community forestry management, the development of water user associations and CPAP. The extent to which these views and practices will continue to change and replicate is dependent not only on decisions made from above but, just as importantly, on the reaction of village organizations and the way they interface with local government.

Village politics and structures

The introduction of elections for VCs and the drafting of charters defining villager rights and responsibilities has led to the possibility of greater openness in

decision-making at the village level. Whilst many village leaders have been wary of these developments, seeing them as 'empowering' villagers, others have used them to strengthen their position, both in relation to the village, and in relation to township and county government. Village leaders have used this new-found legitimacy to gain support from villagers for their decisions, and used the strength of this support to influence decisions made at township and county levels. Traditionally, it has been difficult for such leaders to influence the formal institutions of government, given the VC's official status as a non-governmental, mass organization. Legitimizing authority through election can ease this difficulty. Consequently, when village leaders become interested in the benefits of participation, they can use their position to develop participatory decision-making, appealing both to their village support and to national and provincial statements and policies calling for greater participation in different sectors. Where both Party branch and VC are committed to such an approach, they can influence decisions reached at both township and county levels.

However, it can also be the case that the committee and the Party branch combine with other village organizations to halt the development of participation, when they regard it either as threatening to their position, or not bringing any benefits. This is the case, for example, in so-called 'paralysed villages'[60] in remote and often poorer areas. There, villages are badly managed, village officials receive minimum compensation and use their positions to work with village organizations to line their own pockets, and villagers are often in conflict with their leaders.

> *'Villagers in such places remain unimpressed with the Organic Law, finding the promise of accountability false, the promise of autonomy unlikely and the threat of strengthened control great.'* [61]

Similarly, it can be the case that a village élite, combining Party branch, VC and village organization leaders, ignores requests for implementing participatory approaches on the grounds that it considers villagers to be no longer interested in participation, because they are no longer interested in village politics. As noted in Chapter 2, research seems to indicate that this can happen when labour and commodity markets emerge, providing villagers with alternative employment and commercial opportunities.[62] As such external links develop, farmers lose interest in local politics, and the village élite feels that they have no need to expand involvement in local decision-making.

A key element in village leaders' approach to participation is the role played by social organizations, traditional groups, and grass-roots organizations in the village. We have already seen examples of traditional groups influencing the policies and decisions of branch and village committees, but social organizations also have a role to play, particularly 'new' organizations, representing the interests of owners and managers of local enterprises, migrant workers, and marketing associations. Their importance stems from their new-found economic power and resulting ability not only to influence village decisions but also to lobby for village interests at the township level. An example of a group using its economic power in such a way was provided by women members from a Sichuan village group, attending one of the workshops held in preparation for the case study research

in this book. They had left their village and taken up employment as garbage pickers in a nearby city. On their return to the village, they were able to enhance village income substantially through their earnings, and these became crucial for village improvements. The low status accorded them in the city, and hints of this also emerging in the village – despite their economic importance – made them all the more determined both to participate in decisions on village planning, and to represent their village in discussions with township officials.

Village leaders are also influenced by their interface with organizations providing services in the village, and by groups created by households to deal with a particular issue. These organizations are barometers of villagers' attitudes to policies implemented by leaders. We discussed in Chapter 2 the development of groups set up to improve services such as education, health, and care for the elderly, some of which have local branches in villages. Similarly, groups are set up by farmers to discuss problems of land management and distribution, lobbying the Party branch and village committee on such issues. Some government-sponsored NGOs also have a role to play. Of particular importance is the All-China Women's Federation, whose local branches have empowered women through their involvement in projects in areas such as micro-credit.

In each of these cases, the development of village organizations, emerging for a variety of reasons during the reform period, can provide an impetus to the furtherance of participation, when an enabling framework has been created by elected VCs and VRAs. Organizations, VCs and Party branches can further participation through their interface, enabling them to have a greater influence over decisions made at the township and county levels.

The community interface

Most village households have a detailed and comprehensive understanding of their problems and needs. However, they are hampered by the limited avenues open to them to become involved in planning their development, deciding on appropriate services, and managing their village. In most cases, as we have seen, their organizations remain weak. Similarly, as discussed earlier in this chapter, many villagers do not have the knowledge, skills and information available to discuss with the VC, let alone negotiate with the township.

Many villagers consider that VCs do not adequately represent villagers' interests, and that decisions are made by a small inner circle dominated by the Party branch and its secretary. Many also feel that village leaders have only very limited influence, and that both their and the villagers' wishes will not be taken into account by township and county governments when decisions are being made. Leakage of funds is also a problem, with villagers accusing township and county officials of siphoning off funds intended for village development or poverty reduction.

In the effort to achieve increasing participation at the interface with village politics and formal government institutions, villagers need to be presented with opportunities to develop skills, knowledge and training to understand how government and its institutions operate at the township and county levels and

how to navigate the bureaucratic process, how to access technical information on options, costs and management, and how to negotiate with other stakeholders. It is essential that local organizations modify their ways of working to accommodate the capacity development of farming households and of villagers in these areas.

There are also important internal issues to be addressed by the community itself, in relation to its interface with the VC, Party branch, and local government. In village discussions, it is frequently the case not only that traditional leaders from particular households dominate, but that vulnerable households are effectively excluded from discussions. This is even the case when poverty reduction funds and their use are under discussion. Similarly, men predominate in village meetings, even in villages where they are in a minority, where there has been a substantial feminization of agriculture due to male migration. Women's limited level of involvement in village community decisions often stands in marked contrast with their role in local government, and, indeed their position in both Communist Party and government institutions. Consequently, when 'the village' interfaces with its political organizations and government institutions, it is very often the interests only of particular groups that are being expressed, and on which officials are being requested to act. The development of participation in villages will eventually have to address these issues, and most notably the limited voice of poor households and the under-representation of women.

The role of external organizations in creating an effective interface

In the case studies, the important role of research institutes, development practitioners, and overseas donors in promoting participatory approaches is emphasized repeatedly. Means for promoting participation can be strengthened through the work of such organizations, interfacing with the village community, VCs and local government. What characterizes this interface, and how can external organizations facilitate the development of participation?

If they are accepted by ministries and provincial governments as useful to rural development, external organizations work with village organizations and groups to devise appropriate projects, assessing villagers' needs for implementation; many external agents also play a role in identifying skill gaps and outlining the training needed for effective project implementation. As projects develop, external organizations can involve villagers in monitoring and try to create ways in which they can sustain the achievements of the project after its conclusion. Chinese organizations have proved adept at post-project sustainability, based largely on their skills, resources and extensive networks in the rural sector.

External organizations also play an important role in suggesting means for developing greater coordination between government departments, agencies and village organizations. In some cases, donors have been more effective than Chinese research organizations in this area in recent years. This is evidenced in partnerships at higher levels where coordination is essential if action at the community level is to be effective – a good example is DFID's Yunnan Environmental Development Programme, implemented since 2000, where the

main aim has been to develop partnerships between the various agencies and departments responsible for poverty reduction within the province.

Where there is a need to mediate between the county and township levels of government and village organizations over the introduction of participatory methods, Chinese organizations and institutes specializing in participation are able to play a pivotal role, clarifying participatory aims and discussing preconceptions about participation in village and government meetings. As noted above, government officials often have highly stereotypical views of participation and of the role of villagers in the development process. Both donors and Chinese practitioners of participation have a wealth of knowledge about village communities in China and overseas, and about the possibilities and limitations of the participatory approach, to assist them in questioning and challenging these official views. Additionally, as is demonstrated in the CPAP study, working with donors in the field of training has resulted in important participatory skills development for government organizations.

The issue of the capacity of Chinese researchers and practitioners is also important. They are faced with increasing demands from provinces for assistance in the implementation of participatory projects, particularly in relation to the management of poverty reduction funds and county poverty planning. Similarly, they are becoming overburdened with requests for participatory training. It is clear that existing capacity is inadequate, and that additional researchers and practitioners are required. As the scope of participatory involvement is likely to spread into further areas such as service delivery in the coming years, it is vital that technical capacity is also assessed.

Some participatory practitioners and researchers find it extremely difficult to work with officials at county, township and village levels, given the stereotypical views they confront. It is important for them to devise strategies to deal with these views as they emerge, in each sector. A number of case studies in the book, notably in the areas of resettlement, community forestry and the water sector, provide examples of these views, together with ideas on how to approach discussion of them. In the case of donors, these strategies need to be coupled with developing an understanding of the functioning of government departments, particularly at the county and township levels.

From the village and government side of the interface, working with participatory practitioners and researchers is obviously most effective when they understand what roles they can expect the supporting organizations to play. This has been a key focus in the many workshops already organized at provincial and county level by research institutes working with ministries to delineate the tasks to be undertaken by external organizations in areas such as participatory monitoring and targeting.

A further key area is building a degree of trust between external organizations and officials from county and township governments, and members of VCs. From the government side, it is important that strategies are developed for this, possibly by building on the successes of past projects that have adopted participatory approaches, based on a critical assessment of each intervention.[63] In the Chinese context, external organizations with extensive networks are more likely to be able to build up trust for the development of participation,

compared with those initiating participation on a basis of limited involvement in the countryside.

When working at the village level to enhance participation, the interface with VCs and the village community requires external organizations to clarify, in detail, and agree the roles and responsibilities of government officials, village groups and households. This is particularly the case with projects, where local roles need to be clear at each stage of implementation. One of the main reasons for donor projects not achieving their aims is the failure to delineate these roles with sufficient clarity.

In recent years, senior officials at ministerial, provincial and county levels have accepted the need for participatory approaches, understood their basic tenets, and agreed to incorporate them in projects and programmes for implementation at the village level. They have then allocated these projects to middle-ranking officials who, unfortunately, have little or no understanding of participation. The projects are then implemented in a totally top-down fashion, with these officials mobilizing the population to meet participatory targets. A crucial precondition for project implementation must be improving working relationships between senior and middle-ranking officials in the interests of enhanced participation.

Finally, for an insight into recent trends, it is useful to refer briefly to the Ministry of Finance's *Instruction Manual On Enacting, Managing and Supervising Participatory Planning of Poverty Reduction and Development at the Village Level*, drafted in 2002, in which the Ministry puts forward specific suggestions for improving the interface between local government, village organizations, the village community and participatory practitioners. The manual stresses the importance of international donors in promoting participation. Underlining their role as facilitators and coordinators between local village organizations, it also emphasizes the relevance of the training provided by donors for participatory poverty reduction. The focus is strongly on the models of participation that donors are introducing into the Chinese context: as a result of donor involvement, officials and villagers 'can explore different models, and experience different ways of completing tasks'.[64] The manual also devotes much space to the issue of the training of trainers, giving Chinese researchers and participatory practitioners responsibility for this through workshops at provincial and county levels.

With regard to the implementation of participatory methods, the manual calls for this to be overseen by a *management group* comprising two elected VC members and three other persons elected by village groups representing poor households, women, and the natural villages within the administrative village. The management group is responsible for implementation, monitoring and training of villagers in participatory approaches. Throughout implementation, the group must aim 'to listen to villagers' opinions on implementation and report progress to villagers'.[65]

Management group members will be paid, and are responsible for producing a final report – agreed by village households – to the township government and the county level poverty alleviation office. The poverty alleviation funds used in implementation are managed by a subgroup from within the management group, with the inclusion of an additional elected villager. Throughout the implementation of the project, monitoring is organized by an additional group of 3–5

people, elected by villagers on the same basis as the management group. In monitoring, considerable emphasis is placed on the need to collect villagers' opinions and suggestions, and react to these; and on investigating and recording the impact which the project has on the lives of poor households, by regularly sampling households and villages.[66]

Project Level Constraints on Participation

Project funding

The question of funding and its degree of influence over participatory objectives seems to elicit very different perspectives from local participation specialists. On the one hand, the need for funds to pay for the high costs of the participatory project has been emphasized time and again. In the case of resettlement projects the costs of participation are not separately accounted for and ultimately are added to the overheads of the executive office. Even within the same sector, such as natural resource management, experience differs. In the Cao Hai case, finance was a critical aspect of success. In the community forestry management project in Da Maha in Yunnan described in Chapter 6, however, evidence suggests that finance was not a determining factor: while finances were mobilized from all levels of government, much of it was misdirected and in practice the funds were used to repeat old methodological mistakes.[67]

The forestry cases provide examples of the importance of sufficient funds. In the Jinping forestry project, the lack of funding affected which groups finally benefited from the project. Because the village forestry farms had enough money to pay in advance, the county officials preferred to channel funds to them, hindering the participation of the target beneficiaries.[68] Perhaps a common finding across all case studies is the lack of adequate resources for capacity building. The common concern seems to be that there is a lack of funding for training initiatives, and for the equipment and material necessary for launching effective and appropriate training events tailored for the participants.

But it is not just the failure to understand the costs of participation that affects the participatory endeavour. Often it is not a question of *how much funding* but of *how the funding can be used*. The need for flexibility of funding is paramount. There is a need to understand that community objectives and needs change with time – and as their capacity to make decisions improves. Whereas project financing is geared to early disbursement, the participatory project is typically a slow starter, and the budgets must be geared to allow for this and to adapt as the activities themselves influence the next steps.

At the same time it is worth reiterating the common occurence of fund diversion if local officials are able to choose how funds are used. It is not uncommon, for instance, for afforestation loans to be used for other capital infrastructure projects or to fund recurrent administrative costs. Protecting the monies allocated to community participation is a difficult job in resource-deficient government.

The importance of the funding mechanism – the way the participation is funded – is also brought to the fore by the implementation of the World Bank Forestry Development in Poor Areas Project, described in Chapter 5 in relation

to Jinping County, where the cost of participation was a part of the cost of the project and was thus subject to repayment as a part of the World Bank loan. This created little incentive for government beyond keeping project costs to a minimum. As a result, and despite the stated participatory objectives of the project, the way the funding was provided, through a loan facility, created disincentives and seriously compromised the participatory process.

The lack of identifiable funding also affects the degree of commitment of local officials and the way they carry out their tasks. Typically, the participatory process requires more visits and more support than support activity that is led from a desk. Yet it is also common to see local officials – those who are committed to the methodology – footing the bill for their travel and expenses. In the World Bank Forestry Project in Poor Areas case, it has been revealed that many extension workers do not have transport and are not provided with any by government. They have had to use their own bicycles or motorcycles and pay for the fuel themselves. Those with less commitment justify their lack of activity on the grounds that they would have to finance their own costs and are not prepared to do so. If participation is to become an important tool in the development of sustainable projects, the institutionalization process will need to address the cost for all parties, including the extension workers.

Associated financing such as revolving funds are also seen as a useful component of participatory projects, stimulating interest amongst households, creating incentives for their commitment to projects and proving that they can work together as a coherent community group to their mutual gain. The Community Trust Fund in the Cao Hai case described in Chapter 6, for instance, has underpinned project objectives by providing households with additional financial assistance.[69] Their control over the use of the funds (participants set up the rules and procedures for its use) has been a critical aspect of its success.

Project design and programmes

Participation takes time. All too often project design, programming and budgeting fail to take account of the time-consuming nature of the participatory process. The programmes established and the milestones they incorporate are simply not achievable if participation is to be undertaken in any meaningful way. It is ironic, too, that those donors most keen and rigid in relation to the uptake of participatory approaches are unable to 'let participation into' their own systems and management procedures. Detailed project planning (terms of reference and consultancy contracts) over fixed periods (whether two or five years) is required to specify inputs and outputs – and expected outcomes – without acknowledging that the whole idea of participation is based on the concept of responding to community needs – needs that inevitably (and moreover, hopefully) change with time and capacity. Often project design includes the concept of participation but gives no room for its operationalization.

As with any development project, the desire to create visible results at the outset in donor projects must be balanced with the need to progress at the pace set by the participating communities and households. (In the CPAP, for instance, the strict schedules[70] created timetables that were not always achievable.) Project

design must provide for a level of flexibility sufficient to ensure that results are not compromised.

In some instances the lack of a framework or methodology to guide the process of community participation is seen as a stumbling block – and these are cobbled together at the last moment. Other situations (eg, the Sino-German Afforestation Project and the World Bank forestry project in Jinping) reveal the rigidity of guidelines and the inappropriateness of predetermined models of participation and methods. The studies note that the guidelines tend to be followed literally rather than in spirit. A clear framework – tailored to each specific context – is crucial where capacity is low and external support in scarce supply. Capacity building to accompany the framework is just as important.

What is clear is that the piloting stage is essential. It promotes better understanding of the specific issues to be addressed and the key influencing factors in any context; and by allowing a learning process it provides the opportunity to revise approaches before funding for the larger project is committed. But piloting can also be heavily compromised by the need to see results, by short programmes, by the selection of inappropriate sites, and so on. Establishing clear objectives for the pilot sites and then developing criteria for their selection and programmes for implementation to meet these objectives is essential.

Donor roles

Donors play a key but sometimes conflicting role in the development of participatory projects because their stakeholding presence is often both vital and problematic. We have highlighted the important role of donors in piloting participatory initiatives in China during the 1990s. This established the process as a possibility by exploring the particularities of working in the Chinese context at the same time as bringing benefits to those sectors (such as agriculture and forestry) involved in specific projects. Many of the cases researched for this volume note the importance of external agents as catalysts for change: of specialists skilled in facilitation and of specific grants for building up meaningful and not superficial participatory approaches. These inputs often come only with international donor funding, and to some extent these projects are able to circumvent bureaucratic blockages as a result of their one-off status.

Yet, as we have noted, donor involvement can also bring its own set of constraints on effective participation. To some extent at least the international community can be accused of working within the limits of their own agendas for China. The interest in pursuing democratic processes and environmental protection are both examples that may bring benefit in the Chinese context but also reflect their Northern roots. It is common in China, as elsewhere, for donors to impose particular models of participation quite rigidly, even to the point of applying their own methodologies. The GTZ use of the ZOPP method in China is a case in point,[71] and has parallels with the British use of PRA in India for decades.

Even if the methodology itself is not imposed, the tendency to impose a form of participation – to dictate the degree of participation that must be achieved – is common in project documents. Typically, government departments sign up to

this without understanding its implication, and struggle during implementation to achieve what is required in a differing cultural, historical and social context.

Whilst bringing substantial benefits for the furtherance of participation, donors need to take care that they do not alienate groups with whom they have to inter-relate. Much is said in this book about the tendency of donor organizations to require participation in situations where it is not yet appropriate. Donors often stake their claim to involvement by stressing the substantial innovations and original approaches they will bring to a project, regardless of the actual situation on the ground. Whilst it is important for external organizations to establish their legitimacy and relevance at the outset, clarifying how they can bring improvements both to projects and to development in general, this needs to be done within the Chinese context if the project is to be accepted. Knowledge on how this context is in fact different is an essential part of this process.

Donor funding can also undermine existing flows of community resource and community initiative. Many stories describe villages that were ready to work together to extend water supply or other infrastructure but suspended their own initiatives when they were made aware of the possibility of donor funding. This situation often reverses their willingness to participate – especially when villagers then decide that they would prefer to be passive recipients and not get involved in the process at all.

Concluding Remarks

The goal of testing innovative processes and approaches lies in the replication of successful initiatives. Yet many donor projects remain isolated efforts that governments at different levels have neither taken up nor developed with any sense of ownership. In the CPAP process perhaps for the first time government has adopted a participatory approach and begun to mainstream it into policy and planning but it is still uncertain as to whether it will be replicated at the scale currently envisaged. Moreover, replicability will be dependent on the large number of external and internal factors mentioned throughout this chapter. Knowledge of these factors and their implications are critical to the future development of participation in China.

Notes

1 Notably NPC Standing Committee Chairman, Peng Zhen.
2 The provisions of the Organic Law on Village Committees are described in Chapter 2 and discussed further in the course of this chapter.
3 1n 1989–90, opponents of the Law tried to argue that it should be repealed, associating it with the 'bourgeois liberalization' measures put forward by (the then discredited) Party General Secretary, Zhao Ziyang.
4 See O'Brien and Lianjing Li, 2000, pp465–89.
5 See the note on the holding of this election in O'Brien and Lianjing Li, 2000, p488.
6 President Jiang Zemin, 25 September 1998 in Anhui Province. Translation by Li Xiaoyun.

7 The policy framework for forestry, for instance, is described in Chapter 5.
8 In particular, the Organic Law on Village Committees described in Chapter 2 and discussed further in this chapter.
9 For example, since 1991, courts have been given power to hear complaints against administrative decisions. The State Compensation Law provides monetary redress to individuals and organizations harmed by unlawful bureaucratic action. The 1997 Administrative Supervision Law authorizes the amendment or annulment of regulations inconsistent with laws and regulations issued at higher levels. Under the 1994 Arbitration Law, committees have been set up under provincial governments to handle economic disputes. In early 1999, a constitutional amendment recognized private property rights for the first time since the end of the period of Mao Zedong's rule. Recent revisions to the Economic Contract Law, published in 1999, place considerable emphasis on the principles of equality and the protection of social and economic well-being as limits to contract autonomy. See Potter, 1999, pp673–83.
10 Constitutional amendments are required to bring some laws into line with international agreements. This is the case particularly in relation to human rights issues.
11 *Chinabrief* 2(1) (February 1999): 5.
12 This section is largely based on Ogden, 2002, as well as the Organic Law of the Local People's Congresses and Local People's Governments and the Election Law of the National People's Congress and Local People's Congress.
13 Various capacity-building initiatives have been launched with the support of international agencies such as the Ford Foundation, to address these problems.
14 See Ogden, 2002, p200.
15 These may exist at the outset or be created after the election process is over.
16 Observation of a Su villager quoted in Ogden, 2002, p203.
17 This is discussed in detail in Chapter 11.
18 In the mid 1950s, peasants formed 60 per cent of Communist Party members. In 1979, at the beginning of the reform era, almost half the Communist Party's 37 million members had joined during the Cultural Revolution period (1966–76). During the latter years, recruitment was mainly from amongst poor peasants and urban workers. On this point, see Burns, 1999, pp580–94.
19 On this point, see Li and White, 1990, p15.
20 See Li Xiaoyun and Remenyi, 2002, p15.
21 See Figure 5.1, Chapter 5.
22 See Liu Jinlong et al, discussion in the introductory section of Chapter 5.
23 Ye Jinzhong and Liu Jinlong, 2000.
24 Unger, 2002, p198.
25 Liu Jinlong et al, 2000, p8.
26 Agriculture Department, Ministry of Finance, *Report on Findings of China's Poverty Reduction Funds Management*, November 2001, p9.
27 In 1999, for example, the central government invested 4 million yuan in Linyou County, Sichuan Province, when the county was listed as a pilot county for poverty alleviation. In the same year, the province and cities invested 0.9 million yuan, and the counties provided 100,000 yuan. Source: Agriculture Department, Ministry of Finance, 2001, p11.
28 See Agriculture Department, Ministry of Finance, 2002.
29 Financial constraints at project level are described below.
30 Unger, 2002, pp197–8.
31 Nyberg and Rozelle, 1999, p63.
32 Organic Law on Village Committees, Articles 2, 3, 16, cited in Dearlove, 1995, p127.
33 See, for instance, Chapter 6, Table 6.5
34 These quotations are taken from Ye Jingzhong, 2000, pp185–6.

35 On this issue, see Wang Zheng, 2000, pp62–82.
36 See Croll, 1994, p163.
37 On this point, see Oi and Rozelle, 2000, pp513–39.
38 See Croll, 1994, pp172–7.
39 See Beynon and Zheng Baohua, 2000.
40 This is taken from Feuchtwang, 2000, p174.
41 China's minority nationalities form 8 per cent of the population, and occupy approximately 60 per cent of the national territory.
42 Provincial data (2000).
43 See Chapter 6.
44 See Chapter 6.
45 In one middle school visited by the authors in 2000 in the remote upland administrative village in Gao Hang in Yunnan, school attendance figures were 11 girls to 43 boys, apparently owing to the lack of cash income for school fees, the long distances to the school from neighbouring villages and the custom of girls staying at home to supplement farm labour and collect water.
46 For a more detailed discussion, see Wang Wanying, 1999, p111.
47 This feature was found, for example, in recent field-work undertaken in southeastern Gansu by researchers from China Agricultural University during a social appraisal of the World Bank Loess Plateau II Project, 2001.
48 See Chapter 5.
49 These constraints are identified as prejudice, violence, work burdens and education.
50 The Law on the Protection of Women's Rights and Interests.
51 Wang Wanying, 1999, p111.
52 In many cases, small, homogeneous, all-women groups provide a sensitive forum in which women may express their views and describe their problems and experiences. Initiating processes via a disaggregation of the community into small groups can promote the participation of the weaker and more vulnerable sections, enabling them to develop confidence and consolidate their views before participating in the broader community forum. This is discussed further in Plummer, 2000.
53 Ren Xiaodong et al, 2003, p26.
54 On this point, see also Oi and Rozelle, 2000, pp513–39.
55 Lai Qingkui, undated, p14.
56 Chen Shaojun et al, 2002, p11.
57 The concept of an interface is developed in the context of urban community participation in Plummer, 2000, pp61–7.
58 For an excellent discussion of the current situation in township government, see Lianjiang Li, 2002, pp704–23. See also, Bernstein and Xiaobo Lu, 2000, pp742–63.
59 See Lianjiang Li, 2000, p707.
60 A term used by O'Brien, 1994, p51.
61 See O'Brien, 1994, p51.
62 See Oi and Rozelle, 2000, p528.
63 For an analysis which undertakes this, see Taylor and Li Xiaoyun, 2002.
64 Agriculture Department, Ministry of Finance, 2002, p21.
65 Agriculture Department, Ministry of Finance, 2002, pp41–4.
66 Agriculture Department, Ministry of Finance, 2002, p46.
67 Ren Xiaodong et al, 2002. See Chapter 5, section 5.
68 See discussion in Chapter 5.
69 See Chapter 5, Section 3.
70 ADB/LGOP, 2002.
71 See Chapter 5.

Part 2

The Experience of Community Participation in China: The Case Studies

5
Enhancing Community Participation: Participatory Forestry Management in China

Liu Jinlong, Wu Junqi, Yuan Juanwen and Zhou Pidong[1]

Background

In China, forestry plays an important role in poverty alleviation, water and soil protection and the preservation of biodiversity and traditional cultural heritage. For many years, China's forestry sector has been a focus of international attention and, as a result, has been supported by a number of forestry development projects and sector-wide bilateral and multilateral development assistance programmes. Since the 1990s, community participation has become a central tenet of projects funded by international agencies – and, in most cases, a condition of funding.

This chapter outlines the development of participatory processes in the forestry sector and the government role in relation to community participation. It draws on research conducted in two key donor-funded forestry projects in China: the Sino-German afforestation projects, financed by KfW, the German development bank; and the Forestry Development Programme in Poor Regions, financed by the World Bank.

Two of China's main forested regions are covered by considering these cases: the collective forest area of Jinping in Guizhou Province, and the key protected areas of the Yangtze River and desertification prevention and control in Jiangxi, Hunan and Anhui provinces and Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region.

This chapter is set out in seven sections. Following this introduction, the second section provides background information on forestry in China, identifying the main stakeholders involved in the forestry sector and outlining government policy, legislative milestones and challenges in relation to community participation in forestry management. The third and fourth sections provide case study material for an analysis of community participation in forestry in China.[2] These case studies consider the nature and extent of participation achieved in each project. The fifth section considers the external factors

affecting the implementation of participatory processes, while the sixth turns to more recent initiatives in the forestry sector that have aimed at providing a positive framework for community participation in forest management and protection. The concluding section provides recommendations and proposes specific activities for empowering local forestry authorities to promote community participation.

The Operating Context of the Forestry Sector and Forestry Resources

Pressure on China's forests and other resources is enormous: 38 per cent of the country (about 367 million hectares) is affected by soil erosion, while desertification is prevalent in 27 per cent of the land area – a figure that grows annually by a quarter of a million hectares.[3] About one-third of all grassland is subject to degradation. Biodiversity is also under threat with 15–20 per cent of fauna and flora threatened with extinction in the wake of the recent disappearance of an estimated 200 plant species (World Bank, 1994). Deforestation and the conversion of fragile land for agriculture are thought to be the most serious causes of this environmental degradation.

In response, the government has placed great emphasis on forestry development. Today China has the largest plantation area in the world. Some 46.7 million hectares account for 30.4 per cent of the total forested land.[4] Moreover, the government is seeking to increase forest cover to 19.4 per cent, 24.4 per cent and 26 per cent of the total land area by 2010, 2030 and 2050 respectively.[5] Most recently, the government's decision to implement a logging ban in large areas of natural forest makes the shift to plantations more urgent.[6] An increasing number of forestry projects (either donor-sponsored or financed domestically), have a large component of plantation development. In most cases, a plantation is either owned by a collective or owned privately through the allocation of land-use rights for barren land. Participation has become a key prerequisite of the projects.

Key stakeholders

Forestry development relies on the participation of a range of stakeholders. Table 5.1 provides an overview of the key actors involved and their different objectives. The roles and responsibilities of different stakeholders in China's forestry sector have evolved over time. In parallel with the shift towards a socialist market economy since the late 1970s, change has been dramatic. The liberalization associated with this transformation has had profound impacts on community participation in forestry management. Most importantly, while the ownership of forest land remains in public hands (either state forest farms or collectives), forest utilization and management is increasingly being handed to households, communities and private enterprises. In addition, responsibilities are being transferred within the public sector from the centre towards local level authorities.

Table 5.1 *Key stakeholders involved in the forestry sector*

Function	*Stakeholders*	*Main objectives*
Forestry sector administration	State Forestry Administration	Ensure sustainable forest management
	Provinces and prefectures: Forestry departments Counties: forestry bureaus Townships and villages: forestry stations	Protect and cultivate forest resources and promote forestry sector development
Forest ownership	State Collectives	All forest land is publicly owned
	Households, private entities	Individuals have the right to own planted trees
Forest utilization and management	Households Farmer cooperatives/communities Collectives	Harvesting; protection of soil and water resources; fuelwood and NTFPs; and spiritual forests
	State forest farms	Harvesting; environmental protection; and natural landscape and historical site protection
	Foreign investors	Generate income and raw material base for processing
Forest product marketing	Middlemen and private companies State timber companies	Economic returns
Processing	Small-scale private enterprises Medium-scale private or state enterprises Large foreign investment enterprises	Economic returns

Forestry administration

To manage its extensive forestry resources the government operates a complex hierarchy of administrative institutions (see Figure 5.1). There are five levels of forestry administration under each level of the government administration, including the State Forestry Administration (SFA)[7] (formerly known as the Ministry of Forestry) at the centre, provincial and prefecture/city[8] forestry departments, county forestry bureaux and town and township forestry stations.

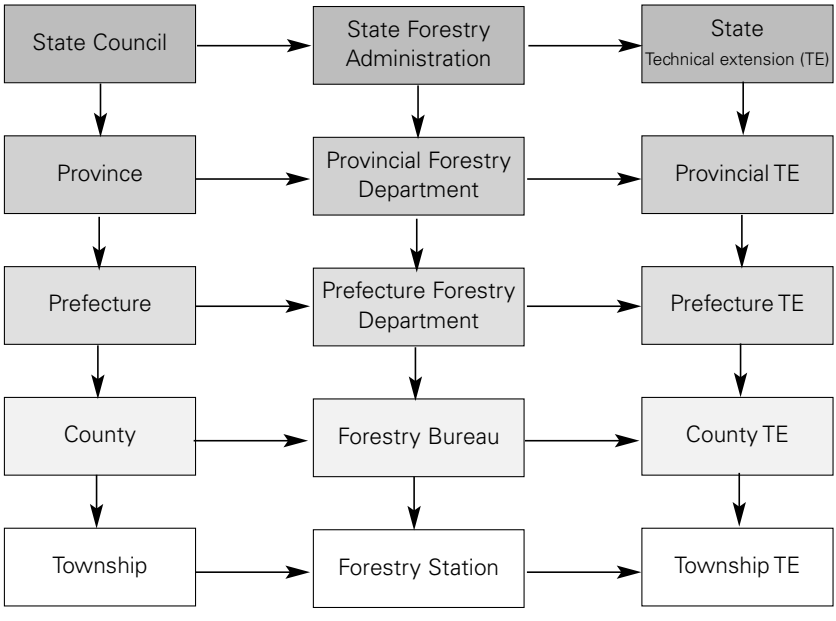


Figure 5.1 *Structure of forestry administration*

This hierarchical system of administration fosters an approach to forestry development that follows conventional planning, project formulation and implementation. The mandate at each level of government does not lend itself explicitly to community participation, but implicitly favours a process of deference to upper levels of the forestry authority and governmental administrators. Within this top-down system, forestry projects are inclined to target specific geographical regions rather than specific social groups, looking for efficiency rather than equity in project outcomes. This approach is in keeping with centrally planned economies, which are characterized by a hierarchical system of administration executed through meetings and the furnishing of official orders for resource planning, distribution, monitoring and evaluation. This process has led to less consideration for, and reduced importance of, community participation in forestry development projects.[9] With neither an explicit market model nor an effective public monitoring system, and with the behaviour of officials and institutions controlled by orders from upper-level government through official orders, this is inevitable.

Projects undertaken in this top-down system have been characterized by, 'little coordination among horizontal and vertical governmental agencies, low efficiency, financial black holes, improper use of nature resources and low participation'.[10] In the past two decades, as the government has reformed its management of public affairs and the economy, a degree of ambiguity has emerged over the new role of markets and business and particularly the new role of the people. It is this change that has created the space for community participation.

In the face of liberalization initiatives, the national, provincial and lower-level authorities have gradually reduced their direct involvement in forest utilization and management. Since 1978, the market has been gradually liberalized and private producers have been increasingly permitted to sell some or all of their output freely. In 1985, the Unified Procurement System was officially abolished. However, the government re-imposed controls in 1987 following rapid deforestation. It introduced the Centrally Determined Annual Allowable Cut system, which requires all non-government organizations to apply for a harvest quota from forestry authorities before undertaking any commercial harvesting. Since then the state has gradually released its grip over state forest farms and reduced the quantity of logs harvested and sold to the government at set prices (normally lower than the market price). More recently, state forest farms have been subject to the same controls as those under private or collective ownership. Collectives have been able to sell freely since 1993.[11]

It should be noted that while the SFA supervises the implementation of central government forestry laws and policies, it does not have the authority to enforce these policies and laws directly (see Figure 5.1). This lack of administrative authority is often reinforced by a lack of financial power. While local authorities receive project funds from the SFA, they depend on local treasuries as well as their own revenue (from local charges and taxes) to cover recurrent costs, such as staff salaries. This creates scope for the local forestry officials and authorities to interpret the law and regulations according to their own personal and institutional interests, in most cases violating the interests of community participation in forest management.[12] This practice upsets the already unstable policy of land tenure, which remains a major factor affecting community participation in forest management.[13]

Forestry regulations and development planning

The Forest Law of the People's Republic of China (1998)[14] is the primary legal document providing for forest resource management. It sets out a range of government financial incentives for private investment in management and also the government's intention to establish a Forest Environmental Benefit Compensation Fund to encourage forest protection and allow and encourage the transferability of use-rights to forest land. Whilst all forests are managed in accordance with the Forest Law, it allows for significant flexibility in interpretation. With approval from the SFA, provincial regulations may be introduced to suit local conditions. In general, this has not created a favourable environment for the promotion of community participation and local authorities are inclined to take more control over resources (despite the fact that this acts counter to intended governmental reform).

In no legislation relevant to forest management is there a clause relating to community participation in forest management planning, development project design, implementation or monitoring and evaluation. However, the role of government is set down in relation to protection, management and construction of forest resources, biodiversity, and plant and animal resources.

Within the main national-level planning programmes,[15] there has been some attempt to adopt the concept of public participation. Amongst their key objectives

these programmes aim to develop a participatory monitoring mechanism for environmental protection, to enhance the scientific component of the work and to increase the level of democracy in decision-making and management related to environmental matters. These planning programmes have been necessary to strengthen market-based instruments that encourage and provide incentives to the private sector or individual farmers participating in the restoration, protection and management of degraded land.

For example, the policy 'auction for four kinds of wastelands'[16] for plantation and pasture refers to the enhancement of the community-based organization. In the Programme of Conversion of Farming Land to Forestry and Pasture,[17] in order to respect farmers' wishes the principle of the policy has been defined explicitly as 'farmer self-imposed participation in the programme and for private ownership plantation'. For instance, a shift to fencing pasture from open grazing in Xilinguole Prefecture of Inner Mongolia is clearly designed to respect farmers' wishes, although there is no clause to ensure this is operationalized. Despite these examples of policy and planning programmes relevant to forest management, there has been no clear definition of implementation measures and procedures for the participation of various stakeholders.

Land tenure and land reforms

Forest land in China is either owned by the state or by collectives. State forests are managed by government (county level and above) on behalf of the citizens of China, and local townships and villages own collective forests. The government's decision to permit the auctioning of barren forest lands to private operators for afforestation was a key prerequisite for its Forest Law Amendment of 1998.[18] The Four Wastelands, as they are known, cover about 5.6 per cent of China's land area and include uncultivated barren hills (sloping land), valleys, river banks and wilderness.[19] Through auctions, farmers were able to compete for long-term utilization and management (though not ownership) rights over barren land, rather than depending on administrative allocation. Moreover, the policy had the added effect of reinvigorating efforts to clarify forest use rights.

Forest management

Forest management has traditionally been the responsibility of the government, undertaken by agencies that oversee collectives and state forest farms. Increased private sector involvement in forest use has weakened the government's ability to monitor forest management from the centre, to the extent that households are now required to undertake regeneration or management as part of their contract with the collective (eg, in wastelands). However, given the limited levels of skills in the forestry sector, the limited investment and low disposable incomes, many households undertake only a minimal level of management.

To reverse the lack of investment, the government has introduced forest management standards. The system of harvesting certificates introduced in 1986 requires those wishing to harvest timber (be they individuals, groups or state-

owned enterprises) to produce plans outlining the harvesting method, location and regeneration activities. All cut forests must be replaced within two years of felling. Logging certificates are issued in compliance with the Centrally Determined Annual Allowable Cut.[20]

New requirements for regeneration have increased the advantages to households of forming cooperatives or associations to share the costs of purchasing inputs and undertaking physical work. Greater cooperation should help to ease financial constraints and may promote forest management investment above the level required by the government. There are an increasing number of cases where households form associations to work together for fire protection, resource monitoring, the supply of seeds and seedlings, exporting and marketing, technical advice and training.

Current initiatives in forestry and the environment

Alongside its various legislative initiatives, China has invested in a number of programmes to expand its forestry resources. Since 1978, ten forestry programmes have been launched, targeted mainly at safeguarding and maximizing forest environmental benefits such as watershed protection, soil erosion control and biodiversity. By 1999 the programmes had established a total of 38.39 million hectares of plantation. While traditionally these have been implemented in a top-down manner, there is a clear shift in more recent programmes towards increased community participation. This shift is notable in the three most recent large-scale forestry programmes (see Box 5.1): the Natural Forest Protection Programme (NFPP); the Conversion of Farmland into Forests and/or Grasslands Programme;[21] and the National Programme for Prevention and Control of Desertification.

In all three, those who plant trees in barren areas are awarded rights to these resources. As indicated in the NFPP, the government will

> *'vigorously encourage private involvement in contracting for forest protection and management, and gradually set up a new model of Natural Forest Protection Programme implementation which is market-economy-oriented and involves participation of multi-disciplinary stakeholders, including the private sector'*.[22]

Farmer requirements and decisions should be at the forefront of programme policy. At the core of the 'grain for green programme' is the idea of 'volunteer participation by farmers and private individual contracting out'. Supporting rural communities to develop alternative livelihoods has been highlighted in these programmes. The need for coordination between sectoral departments is also increased in these programmes – none are implemented by one sector agency and all are the result of joint efforts by several sectors. For instance in the 'grain for green' project, the forestry sector assists farmers in land-use planning and tree planting, the grain food sector helps farmers to obtain subsidy for grain, the fiscal sector assists in the provision of subsidies for planting, and the land resource and forestry sectors help with long-term land-use licences for forests. All these activities are recorded in a document called the 'household evidence card' which each participating household receives.

BOX 5.1 RECENT FORESTRY DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMMES IN CHINA

The *Natural Forest Protection Programme* (NFPP) commenced in 1998 and introduced a ban on industrial logging in natural forests throughout most of China. It is a large-scale scheme to protect over 95 million hectares of natural forest by 2010. The State Council has committed to spending US$11.6 billion (RMB96 billion) over ten years from 2000. The key aim of the programme is to protect valuable forest environmental services, most notably watershed protection services.

Desertification prevention and control programmes include: (1) the Three Norths Shelterbelt System Programme; (2) the Plain Farmland Shelterbelt System Programme; (3) the Taihang Mountain Afforestation Programme; (4) the Programme on Water and Soil Conservation in the Middle Reaches of the Yellow River; and (5) the National Programme for Prevention and Control of Desertification. The media have been used to help raise public awareness of the need to combat desertification. A policy was formulated to extend government discount credits to projects of desertification control and to exempt taxes for a limited period on benefits acquired from exploiting barren mountains and sandy land.

The *National Land Conversion Programme* was introduced in 2000 for western China to reverse the degradation of vegetation and soil erosion by converting steep lands that are presently cultivated or barren into forest, shrub or grassland cover – through providing a mixture of food and cash subsidies over a period of eight years.

The importance of a favourable policy environment for promoting community participation and for development has been recognized. Measures include reducing taxation and charges on forestry products; stabilizing land and resource tenure; providing economic incentives for promoting participation in forest management; and streamlining staff levels in the forestry sector.

The Sino-German Afforestation Project

The Sino-German Afforestation Project is a collaboration between the Chinese Ministry of Finance and KfW of Germany. Since 1994 these organizations have jointly financed an afforestation programme in the lower and middle reaches of the Yangtze River, the Yellow River and the 'Three Norths' areas.[23] The programme aims to improve land productivity, the livelihoods of the rural poor and the quality of the environment in the selected regions through desertification control, water and soil protection and biodiversity protection.[24]

Background

Prior to 1996, afforestation projects in China were characterized by a conventional top-down planning approach. One of the main problems with this method was that, in the process of project implementation, forestry extension field-workers[25] dominated the technical design process and ignored the views of farmers. Farmers were not given a role in defining the objectives or scope of projects and ultimately became passive participants in the project interventions.

The land areas selected and the scope of the afforestation models employed were generally determined by budgets rather than the potential use and quality of land.[26] The scope of the resulting projects was fixed, they failed to accommodate fluctuations in markets, and farmers' wishes or concerns in respect to resource utilization and investment were generally neglected.[27] A common outcome of this top-down planning was a reluctance on the part of farmers to become involved in projects.

By 1996 the German Development Bank, KfW, had changed its approach to afforestation projects, and in China it reorientated its project funding towards a more bottom-up approach, promoting the participation of the final project stakeholders and utilizing participatory techniques in planning and management. In the project context this meant that:

- Farmers would be involved in the afforestation of village sites; would take decisions in respect of planning, selection of sites, selection of species, forest protection and management; and would share in the benefits of products derived from plantations/forests.
- Forestry extension field-workers and the administrative authorities of province, county and township would assist farmers in taking decisions that were appropriate and technically suitable for the sites, and would help facilitate financial assistance.[28]

The main reason given in the finance agreement for promoting participation in afforestation projects is to improve the attainment of project objectives, on the grounds that community participation promotes a sense of ownership amongst farmers in the project. Beneficiaries are more inclined to take care of afforested areas if their thoughts and ideas about the cultivation of plantations are heard and they play a role in decision-making. They are more enthusiastic and more willing to be actively associated with project activities if they are cultivating their own fields and orchards. In addition to increasing ownership and motivation of beneficiaries in afforestation projects, participation also increases community awareness of their duties and responsibilities and those of the Forestry Department.[29]

Project design

The development of the Sino-German Afforestation Project took place in two distinct phases.

- In the pre-feasibility phase, after the approval of the proposal by the agencies responsible, the provincial forestry bureau requested that an affiliated project design institute formulate a plan for the area (under normal circumstances county forestry bureaux prepare technical proposals and financial estimates for afforestation sites). Township officials are generally consulted on these decisions and village heads may provide logistical assistance to the preparation team.
- In the feasibility phase, after approval by the Chinese authorities, KfW and the SFA, a project preparation team was selected to prepare a feasibility report.

BOX 5.2 STAKEHOLDER ANALYSIS AND PROJECT PROPOSAL

The project preparation team – two international and three national consultants – possessed skills in social and economic assessment and participatory land-use planning. The team consulted with all government departments with links to forestry development, from township to provincial level – water resources, agriculture, livestock and environmental protection. In each of the participating counties the team would call a meeting with representatives from all these sectors and explain the purpose of their visit and the project. Participants in the meeting were asked to present background information regarding the current status, ongoing intervention and proposed county development strategy in their respective sectors. The workshops usually ended by discussing potential options for project interventions and, importantly, selecting three typical administrative villages for the piloting phase.

The key aspects of the community consultation undertaken in the selected villages were:

- *A village meeting attended by selected farmers and village committee members.* The team presents the purpose of their visit and participants are asked to draw village sketch maps, particularly to illustrate the location of barren mountainous areas. Together, the participants discuss the category of village (or production group), in terms of its poverty level, resource endowment, physical access to market and overall potential for forest development. The meeting also discusses issues relating to problem identification and solution, species choice, afforestation model, land-use planning, style of forestry management and sharing of benefit. It is requested that at least 20 per cent of participants are women.
- *Farmers' meetings.* In a village or village production group, the team organizes meetings for household representatives (such that at least 50 per cent of households are present), with particular emphasis on meetings for women, men and poor households. The meetings focus on the same issues as those raised at the village committee level, and aim at identifying problems and their solutions.

Tools for participatory appraisal employed in this process include field transects, interviews with key and sample households, visual mapping, Venn social diagrams, wealth ranking, species preference voting, ranking of problems and development potentials.

As this participatory fieldwork is undertaken, a team of technical experts works closely with local forestry extension workers to formulate a technical proposal/plan and budget for the afforestation of the area. This entire process lasted around three weeks.

The report included analyses of stakeholders, constraints and opportunities, objectives, and an intervention strategy; it also covered planning for project implementation and planning for monitoring and evaluation (see Box 5.2 and Table 5.2). Under the terms of reference, the project preparation team had to employ a participatory approach for each step and engage with communities in the process of formulating the report.

Developing an intervention proposal

The proposal stage included setting objectives, intervention analysis, and planning for monitoring and evaluation. The process begins with a basic proposal developed by the consulting team and local counterpart authority. It is followed by two days of workshops attended by all relevant stakeholders including farmers'

Table 5.2 *The design phase of the Sino-German Afforestation Project*

	Major activities	*Lead stakeholders*	*Community influence over decision making*
Stakeholder analysis	Rural economic and social assessment	Project preparation team and governmental authority	****
Constraints and potential analysis	Participatory land-use planning		****
Objective analysis	Participatory project planning/logical framework workshop	Project preparation team and governmental authority	*
Intervention analysis			**
Project implementation planning			*
Planning for monitoring and evaluation			—

representatives, village heads, township and county forestry field extension workers, forestry officials, representatives from other concerned sector departments, and relevant government departments such as finance, planning and auditing. Although the objectives remain fixed, the workshops discuss the draft proposal in groups before convening to give their comment. The project preparation team then revises the draft intervention proposal according to the recommendations proposed in the workshop.

Project implementation phase

Implementing body

Each location has a project executing agency (PEA) responsible for the overall supervision and monitoring of the project and located in the provincial-level forestry department. The project management office is established under the PEA with appropriate personnel and relevant resources supplied directly by the PEA for project management and operation. The counties and banners[30] establish line management offices. The donor agency requested that there be some cooperation between government sector departments and this was attempted through the establishment of a project steering committee. This proved very difficult, however, as it was constrained by China's very strong departmentalization.

Promoting community participation in the projects

The project implemented an 'open programmes' or 'process projects'. This means that the detailed planning takes place step by step, largely during the start-up phase of implementation and in close cooperation with the local population. Communities, village heads and township foresters are invited to participate in a workshop for project implementation and planning.

Financial arrangements

Communities provide about 10 per cent of total investment in kind through a labour contribution – these financial arrangements are fixed without any community consultation. The consultancy team preparing the feasibility study works with local field extension workers to simplify and categorize proposals to adopt one of a few models – each with specific technical requirements and fixed budgeting. In the Inner Mongolia Sino-German afforestation project, for example, the five project models were forestry protection, sand fixation, soil and water conservation, mountain closure with enrichment, and air seeding.

The budgeting for each model is the result of a process of negotiation between the project management office (PMO) and the consulting team. The provincial project office (PPO) and consulting experts also consulted with the county-level forestry office to determine budgetary parameters, such as the cost of labour, seedlings, etc. The budget for each category was fixed in the feasibility study and was then difficult to readjust. The level of investment in the programme was higher than for any other donor-led or domestic forestry project with the exception of the 'Green for Grain' programme and the desertification programme,[31] and included some of the most stringent technical requirements. The investment by area is higher than in the Sino-German programme but with a lower technical requirement. The PLUP process adopted takes time to implement as farmers in the community are mobilized.

The fixed budgeting of the Sino-German programme has been a weakness in some projects as input costs of seeds and seedlings has risen. This is symptomatic of a situation where a donor-led project has increased demand, with knock-on effects on the cost of inputs. In this case, national ventures were priced out of the market.

Even if financial provision for training has been determined, if it is required and agreed it can be adjusted in the annual planning review. Most funding for the training budget is from a matching fund held by government. The training targets for capacity building of forestry extension workers and officials include international study tours, in-country study tours, training workshops and on-the-job training.

Participatory land-use planning (PLUP)

PLUP was planned to begin with a meeting at township level between village leaders, the county/banner project office (CPO) and the township forestry station (TFS). This publicizes the project and provides an avenue for disseminating information leaflets to most counties. A meeting of village members and village group (VG) leaders with the CPO and the TFS is then held during which written information is usually provided to the leaders. Some village meetings are also attended by farmers' representatives. The process is then repeated for VGs, with either one or two meetings being held depending on the land resources of the group. In some instances, however, a lack of interest at the outset and a lack of attendance by key stakeholders in meetings and capacity-building events created setbacks in launching the projects.

BOX 5.3 PARTICIPATORY LAND-USE PLANNING GUIDELINES: SINO-GERMAN AFFORESTATION PROJECT

Step 1 Selection of project townships and villages

Step 2 Publicity campaigns
Provide publicity on project activities, benefits and duties for new villages (not pre-selected). Ask interested villages to submit, through their leaders, their desire to be involved in the project.

Step 3 Assessing existing information on forestry and interviewing key informants
If villages indicate a willingness to participate, endorsed by their leaders, and meet the project selection requirements: Interview key informants; Collect available data on forestry, potential project sites, land tenure, other projects in the region, relevant forest management forms; Assess whether the village meets project selection criteria.

Step 4 Preparation for village meetings
Consult with the head of the administrative village, subvillage or state forest farm to decide the date for the meeting. Take appropriate maps, a blackboard or display board, chalk, drawing pens, papers, project information sheets and sample contracts, etc for the meetings. Invite the technicians from the township agriculture and livestock authorities to join the farmers' meetings or to provide their comments on land-use planning.

Step 5 Leaders' meeting
Aim: To determine the availability and suitability of village land, and its distribution.
If the land-user rights have been distributed to the subvillage or individual households, the PLUP will be carried out with these groups. If the land is still owned and managed by the administrative village (collective), have the village committee organize a meeting to be attended by subvillage leaders and representatives of farmer groups. A meeting procedure is provided which includes the need to confirm that the VC is prepared to support this process, including land allocation; to discuss the approximate boundaries of the allocated land or potentially allocated land; to review current land-use patterns and the planned land-use pattern; to establish which areas are currently or will in the future be used for other purposes, such as agriculture, grazing, real estate, road construction etc; and to allocate areas for activities.

Step 6 First farmers' meeting
Aim: Dissemination of detailed project information to potential beneficiaries.
Arrange a farmers' meeting for each selected subvillage/natural village, including village leaders and all the families in the subvillage/natural village and ensure that women are also invited and attend. Provide information on the project objectives; the 'open' character and participatory planning; the afforestation categories and options; the labour subsidy and the materials provided (such as free seedlings); the beneficiaries' responsibilities; the procedures for project execution (including contracts); the training and technical assistance (including training in nursery production for interested farmers); and the expected benefits.

Step 7 Participatory land-use planning
Aim: Expression of farmers' wishes for the project planning.
Facilitate farmers to draw village resource map. Facilitate the development of feasible measures for controlling/solving potential land-use conflicts (farming/forestry, pasture/forestry). Let each individual household (beneficiaries) decide: (1) whether they would like to participate in the project; (2) whether they wish to be part of a group; (3) the general site and area they want to afforest; (4) the appropriate category. Set the date for the second farmer's meeting.

BOX 5.3 CONT.

Step 8 Second farmers' meeting
Aim: To formalize the project beneficiaries and procedures, based on allocated land.
Explain repeatedly the decisions made at the first farmers' meeting. Encourage any cooperative action proposed by farmers. Request the individuals and groups to complete the summary sheet for the project. Ask for the arrangement for the site visits.

Step 9 Site visit with farmers
Aim: To finalize detailed site planning and implementation procedures with each group/individual household.
Visit the site with each group or individual household and discuss species selection, site preparation, planting techniques, etc. Accurately draw the boundary of the subcompartment on the enlarged topographical map. Take survey measurements as necessary. Complete the relevant sections of the subcompartment record sheet. Back in the office, draw the subcompartment boundary on the 1:10,000 topographical map and measure area.

Step 10 Completion of contracts
The consulting team supplies a local forestry specialist to assist the PMO in project implementation. The participatory forestry specialist works closely with project staff responsible for community participation at the various levels of implementation, conducting village workshops in selected villages to formulate and test participatory forestry planning.

Consultants together with PMO staff provide intensive training for participatory forestry planning (see Table 5.3) to field extension workers and officials at county and township level, both in the classroom and in the field. PMOs and CPOs are also committed to organizing further regular on-the-job training. Because the project has budgeted for training and the consultancy team has monitored levels closely, the training component of the project has worked well. This review occurs annually.

The implementation of PLUP was generally consistent with the guidelines (see Box 5.3) but a number of areas for improvement have since been identified. In some cases the weakness in the implementation of PLUP was due to either a lack of information or the provision of incorrect information to farmers before and during the first mobilization meeting. In particular, farmers were not informed that the Sino-German projects differed from other afforestation projects in that they required farmer participation, that wages be subsidized, and that farmers should share in long-term benefits. This omission was important because in the past afforestation had been a top-down process that provided no compensation for the farmers' (compulsory) labour. Although some information sheets were provided by the CPO, they were not widely distributed. It would appear that a lack of information led to a lower than expected participation rate in the project.

Staff in some CPOs and TFSs have suggested that the PLUP process should be shortened (by omitting some of the participatory techniques, particularly the sketch map), and simplified. The main reason for this is staff shortages. It was also found that some county and township leaders did not understand the objectives, steps and spirit of the PLUP process.

Factors affecting participation

Participation in the project has not been equal and has been influenced by a number of factors: the dissemination of detailed information, the distribution of suitable land, the unavailability of labour to undertake the activities (mainly due to migration activities) and the attitude of some staff and leaders. In addition, some farmers were reluctant to participate because they feared not being paid by the project. This constraint was overcome in some villages when farmers were paid on time, and in several villages surveyed the number of participating VGs had increased significantly. In others, however, payment was late and impacts were affected.

Information and project contracts

Standard contracts were used throughout the project. Most contracts were with groups of farm households but some individual household contracts were issued. Contracts were generally well completed but some irregularities were noted by project staff. Some farmers have only a general knowledge of the project details and of the requirements. For instance in an Inner Mongolian village, farmers stated that they had signed the contract but did not have it to hand. They were able to recite the exact technical requirement for their selected afforestation model but they were unsure how much money they could claim for a successful project. The farmers did not believe that a contract could protect their interests in some cases.

In some cases the subcontract covering the land-use rights with the collective was not completed or remained unclear. This is critical to the project because long-term land-use rights and benefit sharing should be unambiguous to encourage participation. Usually the benefit share to the farmers is 70–90 per cent but in one village it was as low as 60 per cent.

The traditional role of women

Women's participation in PLUP decision-making and field activities is as low as 25 per cent. This has been attributed to unsuitable meeting times, attendance being restricted to only one person per household and traditional attitudes towards women. In farmers' meetings it has been observed that women appear more concerned with animal husbandry and fuelwood-related issues, which are not central to an afforestation project and which, as a result, tend to be pushed to the margins of discussion. For example, in the PLUP process these issues should form part of the sketch-mapping exercise and be discussed fully. This rarely happens.

In some villages, there is gender discrimination in labour and opportunities for work. For example, in a village in Inner Mongolia working with a group contract, a policy was set whereby two female working days equalled one male working day, since demand for male workers was very high in traditional work such as coal mining and day-to-day activities such as irrigation and digging. In a village in Jiangxi, women only receive 80 per cent of the daily payment of a man for the same work in the project. In Inner Mongolia and other parts of northern China,

families headed by widows were seldom granted access to the project because they were unable to contribute labour to the project.

Attitudes and behaviour of field extension workers

History and precedent The attitudes and behaviour of field extension workers and officials towards farmers and the poor is problematic and a legacy of China's centrally planned system. In Jiangxi and Hunan provinces, after 18 months of effort and training, some forestry field extension workers and officials still believe that farmers are inferior and may not be in a position to make decisions that have a positive impact on their livelihoods. Often, however, rather than directly articulating these negative perceptions of farmers, problems are explained away as farmers not wanting to participate. There have, however, been some major achievements. Forestry field extension workers and officials are more aware that the self-reliance, enthusiasm and endeavour of farmers is crucial to the success and sustainability of a project.

Scepticism Many forestry extension field-workers and officials question whether participation is essential. When speaking of their personal experiences and successes in forestry management, none of the local forestry field extension workers talked of community participation. When participatory approaches were introduced, the first response was a request to see a successful case that they could examine.

The type of work involved (eg, technical difficulty) The participatory approach requires field extension workers and officials to come to terms with a vast new set of skills and many argue, quite understandably, that the PLUP process is relatively difficult to implement. There are also logistical difficulties in relation to the method of planting. In the top-down process, the forestry authority plan a seedling nursery a year before planting, but when responsibility is devolved to farmers, they are able to choose their preferred varieties and seedlings may not match those pre-planned by the forestry authority. This problem extends to associated materials and resources required for particular seeds.

Capacity of the local government Prior to the project, staff in many counties had not encountered or received training in participatory methods. The majority of forestry field extension workers are well trained in technical forestry techniques but have no experience of working with communities. The institutional structure of various forestry authorities is well suited to a centrally planned system, but fails to provide many incentives (such as salary benefits and reimbursements or potential promotion) for staff to work with communities.

The lack of training resources Every county suffers from shortages of the equipment and materials needed for training in participatory approaches. In project budgets, there are several budget lines for materials that can be used to improve services for community participation. For instance, there is provision for the purchase of four-wheeled vehicles and motorcycles, pinboards, and toolset bags for community workers. Usually, the project office seeks to expand the budget to purchase

vehicles and to reduce those items that are only for forestry extension workers. Vehicles are easily used for other non-project purposes. In addition, project motorcycles have proved difficult and contentious to administer.

Capacity and capacity building

Training needs

Regular training for staff in PLUP methodology is essential, since fundamental changes in attitude take time to achieve. The experience of the Sino-German Afforestation Project suggests a number of capacity-building approaches.

- PPO staff and CPO managers should be taken to visit other successful community participation projects.
- Workshops bringing together staff and managers from different provinces working on the Sino-German project would promote interaction between senior specialists and sharing of views. Their consciousness, confidence and commitment would be enhanced by such interactions.
- For project office technicians and township foresters, regular PLUP refresher training should be provided.

The process and the spirit of PLUP should be implemented consistently and the steps in the project guidelines carefully followed. This will ensure maximum participation and build a sense of ownership among farmers. This will be greatly facilitated by regular refresher training for staff and the provision of information sheets for technicians and farmers, together with regular monitoring. The preparation of a sketch map by farmers, site visits and the preparation of farmer 'wish lists' form a key component of participation. Further staff training is required to facilitate this component. There is also a need to actively promote individual and voluntary group participation discouraging the accumulation of power by a few individuals who then employ people. Technicians should develop an equal partnership with farmers. They should be patient and guide the PLUP process.

Projects need to provide intensive training for farmers in terms of project policy and afforestation techniques. Women, who do most of the field-work, have not been centrally involved in the PLUP process and its training sessions. In China, it is quite common that the male head of the household will attend meetings rather than a female member of the household; this is especially true with regard to development and planning activities. Although the project requested at least 20 per cent attendance by women at meetings, most women tend to sit in silence, feeling they are intruding on a domain, afforestation, that is not theirs. There is a need to create space for women to be involved in the decision-making process that drives afforestation through participatory techniques: in this way the meeting facilitators can encourage women to speak, to draw the maps.

Monitoring of the participatory process

The PMO, PPO and CPOs should closely monitor the PLUP process to maximize the number of TFS staff in VG meetings; to ensure that the correct steps are

Table 5.3 *PLUP training for the Sino-German Inner Mongolia Afforestation Project (2001–2)*

Topics	*Participants*	*Resource persons*	*No. of days*
Introduction to PLUP and participatory approaches	PPO and CPO staff, prefecture and county forestry officials, monitoring officials	National and international experts	2 days
Prefecture-level training Workshop on formulating PLUP procedure	PPO and CPO staff, prefecture and county forestry officials, monitoring officials	National and international experts	3 days
County-level training workshop on PLUP	CPO staff, county forestry officials, township leaders and forestry technicians	National and international experts, PPO in-charge staff on PLUP work	3 days each county and village selected
First township-level on-the-job training on PLUP	Township and village leaders and foresters	PPO and CPO staff	1–2 days each project villages
Second county-level PLUP refresher training	CPO staff, county forestry officials, township leaders and forestry technicians	National and international experts, PPO in-charge staff on PLUP work	3 days each county and village selected
Third county-level PLUP refresher training	CPO staff, county forestry officials, township leaders and forestry technicians	National and international experts, PPO in-charge staff on PLUP work	3 days each county and village selected
Second township-level on-the-job training on PLUP	Township and village leaders and foresters	PPO and CPO staff	1–2 days each project villages
Fourth county-level PLUP refresher training	CPO staff, county forestry officials, township leaders and forestry technicians	National and international experts, PPO in-charge staff on PLUP work	3 days each county and village selected
Project level training workshop on gender and PLUP	PPO and CPO staff, prefecture and county forestry officials, monitoring officials	National experts, international experts	5 days

followed in the process and that a spirit of participation is developed; to identify and correct any problems; to ensure maximum understanding and participation of farm households; to develop a sense of ownership of the subcompartments by the participating households; and to obtain feedback from the farmers. The PMO sets up a monitoring unit in charge of collecting and analysing all relevant

data including the level of community participation, physical project implementation and the environmental, social and economic impacts of the project. This is undertaken without any participation from the community.

The workshops took place a year and a half after the Sino-German project commenced in Hunan and Jiangxi Province. The project has paid great attention to provincial and county project office training on PLUP, and all the participants in the workshops have intensively practised PLUP processes in the field. The extent to which participants have developed their knowledge and understanding from scratch to a level where they can be considered semi-professional can be used as a barometer of the success of the project in terms of community participation in forestry management. Many now have such a basic understanding and knowledge.

The contribution of the Sino-German Afforestation Project

Although there is a long way to go before the ideal level of awareness of community participation in forestry management is achieved, great progress has been made. A large number of forestry field extension workers and forestry officials have gradually accepted and understood the motive and spirit of participatory approaches in forestry management. This is a fundamental basis from which to expand participatory practice. A decade ago, it would have been hard to speak of participatory approaches in forestry management, but now provincial-level officials and even officials from the SFA have shown interest in and requested advice concerning the delivery of training courses and the provision of policy recommendations for participatory management.

'The major contribution of the Sino-German Afforestation Project is a well-trained, large team.'[32] Counties in Inner Mongolia and Jiangxi have benefited particularly from the training and development of staff associated with project implementation. These counties are both involved in national large-scale environmental programmes,[33] which also require participatory project implementation in accordance with the wishes of farmers. The experience of the Sino-German project appears to have been transferred into the implementation of national programmes, with counties associated with the projects faring much better than those without Sino-German experience. The projects provide a successful example of the introduction of participatory approaches into forestry management in China, although participatory implementation is donor-driven and replication continues to be affected by sector policy and the overstaffing of governmental agencies.

Forestry Development in Poor Areas Project

The Forestry Development in Poor Areas Project, financed by the World Bank, was initiated in 1998 to develop forest resources in poor areas of central and western China on a participatory basis in order to support poverty reduction, forestry development and improved environmental management. The project covers 5043 villages, 197 counties and 12 provinces. The total cost over a five-

year period (1998–2002) was US$364 million. Jinping County in Guizhou is one of the counties in the project, which aims to employ a 'bottom-up' approach,[33] requiring the forestry development process to consider villagers' opinions and match their social and economic levels.

Project structure

The project is structured through the provincial forestry offices – as illustrated in Figure 5.2 below.

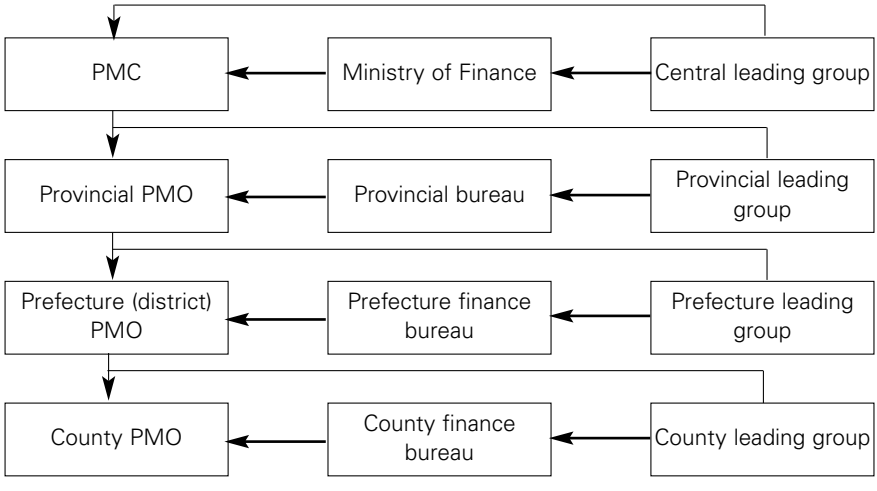


Figure 5.2 *Structure of the Foresty Development in Poor Areas Project*

Project design phase

The project design was undertaken in the following steps: (1) the provincial forestry department formulates an overall plan, then (2) the provincial forestry survey and design academy develops the detailed project design and (3) reports to the project management centre (PMC) at the Ministry of Forestry (MFO) for approval.

There is no requirement for community participation in the design stage, but the proposal requires that villagers' opinions should be considered in the selection of target project sites and activities; in the selection of beneficiaries and tree species; in the organization, production and contract process (planning for implementation); and in their own participation. Although these requirements were made by the World Bank, the reality was that only some trial sites actually included villagers' opinions, and then only in selected activities such as the choice of inputs. In selecting project sites, most PMOs used secondary materials and didn't seek villager's opinions. In selecting tree species, they did ask the villagers' opinions, but the final decision was still made by forestry extension field workers. In the production and contract process as they planned for implementation there was a little more input from villages.

Planned implementation

Formulation of management organizations

Project management is based on a successful implementation structure that was developed in two earlier phases of the project. 'Leading groups' at central, provincial, and county levels continue to establish general policies and procedures and review work programmes. The PMC at the MFO continues to have overall responsibility for project design, execution and supervision. PMOs in provincial forestry departments, prefecture and county forestry bureaux continue to manage the work, mobilize counterpart funding, and provide technical support. Finally the provincial finance departments and county finance bureaux continue to channel project funds (see Figure 5.2).

Training in community forestry assessment (CFA)

Before the afforestation stage of the project, based on the experience of two provincial pilot projects and with the assistance of national and international specialists, the PMC developed a training manual for CFA. However the actual training programme has not been ideal. In 1997 a three-day training workshop was held for staff of the provincial PMO and the provincial survey and design academy. This workshop was undertaken in isolation without any field-work or follow-up refresher training. Despite this, staff still went back to their areas and gave the training to the prefecture (district) staff, who then gave the training to the county staff. With a number of new participatory tools to master, the absence of a field-work component in the training served to exacerbate the difficulty of applying these tools in practice.

Community forestry assessment

The CFA group is a multidisciplinary team consisting of three to four professionals. It includes a forester and a social worker (CFA-trained) and the other professional(s) will provide specialist expertise in rural economy, policy, marketing or soil science. At least one member of the team must be female. The CFA procedure is undertaken as a five-stage process.

1 *Identification:* The selection of the project areas involves the collection and evaluation of baseline socio-economic data. The main criteria for village selection are that the majority of the direct project beneficiaries are poor households located in remote mountainous areas; that the proposed areas contain large blocks of barren wasteland suitable for commercial forestry development; and that there is sufficient institutional capacity in project management units (town, township and village) to implement project activities.
2 *Assessment and feasibility:* The CFA group interviews households and assesses household preferences for tree and plant species. On the basis of this data, the provincial PMO requests that the provincial survey and design academy undertakes a market investigation and an economic analysis, and compiles an inventory of species to be cultivated under the project.

3 *Determining project scope, content and participants:* The selection of beneficiaries and tree species is determined through village meetings and distributing application forms.
4 *Detailed design:* The technical design includes the selection and investigation of afforestation plots, labour allocation and technology training for the beneficiaries.
5 *Determining operational patterns and content of project contracts:* The area comprising a unit and the number of households forming a unit is dependent upon the local situation and beneficiaries' opinions.

Afforestation activities The county PMO signs a loan contract with the village forestry farm and manages the loan repayment. It also provides seedlings, fertilizer, technology services, and a subsidy for afforestation. The forestry farm signs a contract with individual households, which are each responsible for the implementation of afforestation activities.

Monitoring and evaluation The monitoring and evaluation process is very focused on reviewing the area planted and the survival rate of the plantation. The county PMO is responsible for overall monitoring and evaluation. The prefecture and provincial PMOs are responsible for monitoring and evaluation by sampling. There is no community participation.

Project implementation in Jinping County

Jinping is one of the project counties in Guizhou Province. Since its inception in 1999, 14 townships have been covered under the project. Implementation was divided into a pilot and a main phase. Adherence to the participatory objectives was much greater during the piloting. The World Bank evaluation indicated that the interest in participation diminished significantly during the main phase.

Pilot phase

The pilot for the CFA was conducted in Pingqiu township in 2000 over a period of one month. Five villages selected by officials from seven application villages were included in this assessment. The CFA team comprised one member from the prefecture survey and design academy, one staff member from the county PMO and three deputy town leaders. There were no female members of the team. One director and one member of staff from the Pingqiu forestry station, the administrative village leader, 'natural village leaders' and villagers also participated in the CFA activities.

The following steps were carried out in the villages selected for the pilot stage:

- The team interviewed a range of different household types according to their incomes, afforestation experiences and gender. At least 5 per cent of the households in the village were interviewed. The interviews were conducted according to the guidelines for interviewing households in the CFA manual.

BOX 5.4 BACKGROUND TO JINPING – THE PILOT COUNTY

Jinping County is located in Guizhou Province in the southwest, one of the poorest provinces in China. There are 10 townships and five towns in Jinping County, with a population of 202,800. Minority groups (mostly Dong and Miao), account for 84.1 per cent of the population, and the county is characteristic of other minority areas in the region. The grain holding per capita is 273 kg and the annual income per capita is 800 yuan. Of the total land area of 159,100 ha, forest land represents only 56 per cent.

There are 120 staff in the county forestry department (one forestry station per township); one state forestry farm and nearly 300 collective forestry farms. Forestry production is by far the main industry. The Dong minority group conduct their forestry activities in accordance with their traditions and folk law, and they have developed an indigenous knowledge of forest production. Forest contracts formulated 300 years ago are still maintained.

- The team distributed the materials, project input alternatives, species menu and household application forms in the village meeting.
- The team leader introduced the project background, objectives and loan requirements. He also introduced the menu and how to fill in the application form. One team member introduced the proposed afforestation plots.
- The villagers were divided into small groups to discuss the project. The team assisted villagers in selection of the species. The villagers asked some questions, mostly related to the loan and contract. However, while villagers were interested in attending the meeting, there was a feeling that their opinions wouldn't be accepted which hindered their self-expression. Villagers did express their preference for the selection of plant species, but in many cases the staff said these would be too difficult to obtain. PMO staff didn't interview women separately on the assumption that family members would have discussed the project at home before they decided to take part in the project.

In the trial village, although villagers physically attended the meeting, staff didn't encourage participation. One woman said, 'It is no use to express your ideas because the staff are used to large-scale production.' Staff commented, 'We want to solicit some ideas from the villagers, but the final decision is made by us.' Of species which could be in the list for planting, 23 came from one village (45 households). Overall, it was found that villagers in the pilot were willing to take part in the project. In doing so they receive 20 per cent reimbursement for their land contribution and 30 per cent for their labour contribution, while the forestry farm will receive 50 per cent reimbursement. The farm committee members are selected from the villagers. A summary of the participation is provided in Table 5.4.

Training Prior to afforestation, two deputy-directors and 5 staff from the county PMO, and 13 deputy township government officials received 3 days of CFA training for trainers. This was given by the prefecture survey and design academy. These skills were then passed on through subsequent training sessions

Table 5.4 *Key stakeholders in the Jinping Pilot*

	Who participated?	*Participation in what?*	*Measures and tools*
Design phase	• No villagers' involvement • Project management centre at MFO • Provincial PMO	• Preparing CFA manual	
Implementation phase	• County PMO • Township (town) officials • Village committee • Village forestry management committee • Villagers	• Discussion (with villagers) of project areas, beneficiaries, species, • Labour share, land share, contract with debit	• Discussion and expression forms of participation • Village meeting • Key informant interview • Species menu selection
Monitoring and evaluation phase	• Outside experts • PMO staff	• None	• Experts prepare their indicators to monitor and evaluate

to almost 80 people, including management staff from the 32 village forestry farms involved in this project. The CFA was undertaken in the evenings. In the daytime, field extension workers from the prefecture survey and design academy helped villagers to conduct survey and design activities.

Main phase of project implementation There was almost no CFA in the large-scale main phase of project implementation. As the project developed it also become clear that the county PMO preferred to cooperate with village forestry farms. In Jinping County such collectives have been operating for between 40 and 50 years. They are established and have a resource base that enables them to pay in advance. Loan recovery from households was considered very problematic and seen as a very time-consuming process for staff. Despite clear objectives, in the final event most villagers only participated in the project by contributing their labour and land.

BOX 5.5 COMMUNITY FORESTRY ASSESSMENTS IN THE MAIN PHASE

The prefecture survey and design academy technicians helped complete CFA activities and technical design in 20 days. They held village meetings in the evening and conducted survey and design in the day. However, funding was only provided for CFA training, with nothing allocated for CFA activities, and since all the money spent in CFA is included in the loan, the PMO had no motivation to conduct CFA activities. In the village meeting, the team merely informed the villagers about this project and distributed some information materials. During 20 days of activities, they focused on technical design and didn't pay attention to the CFA. The villagers were only the recipients of information, while the PMO field extension workers selected the plant species.

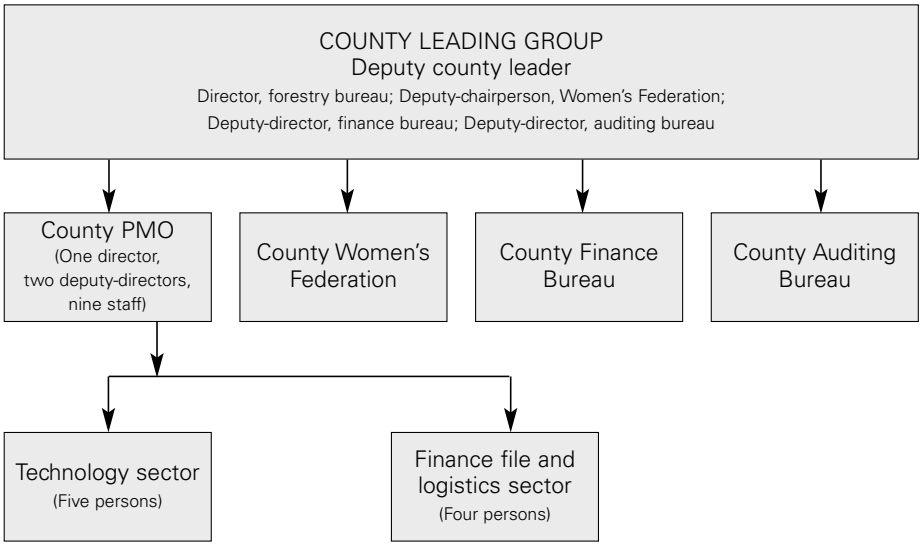


Figure 5.3 *Organizational structure of the Jinping Project*

Organizational structure

As illustrated in Figure 5.3, in the organizational structure of the Jinping Project, one deputy county leader acts as the group leader, responsible for overall co-ordination. This post holder is also part of a leading group formed by a director from the forestry bureau and deputy-directors from the Women's Federation, the financial bureau and auditing bureau, each responsible for coordination of their own departmental activities in the project.

Financial management

The county PMO receives 55 per cent of its funding from the government; the remaining 45 per cent must come from internal revenue streams. The World Bank project requires that local government provides money in advance of afforestation, which can then be reimbursed after the afforestation has met project requirements. The county finance bureau has a contract with the county PMO, which then has a contract with village forestry farm, which in turn has a contract with each household.

Key internal factors influencing community participation

Project level

Sectoral background of county PMO staff Most government personnel have a technical background in natural sciences and have not had exposure to social sciences. They are accustomed to a 'top-down' approach to planning and had not

encountered ideas or methodologies of participatory practice prior to their three days of training. As a result, it has been very difficult for staff to change their attitudes and embrace the concept of participation in such a short time. At the outset, most staff did not accept the CFA activities and did not believe that the villagers had the ability to participate in a meaningful way. Staff also found the CFA activities complicated and unclear. Unwilling to heap more work on themselves – particularly when faced with large-scale implementation – they simply reverted to their old top-down methods to complete their tasks.

Quality of training Training was carried out by prefecture field extension workers after they had received just three days' 'training of trainers'. They were then expected to give three days' training to the county staff. This was clearly insufficient time for them to understand the CFA process. The complicated nature of the CFA tools is illustrated by the example of the deputy county leader. In reading the material, he became unwilling to adopt all aspects of the manual, yet at the same time felt pressure to do so. One of the main issues was that they found it very difficult to encourage villagers to participate and were not familiar with techniques that would assist them to promote participation.

Funding The cost of the CFA stage must be paid back as a part of the World Bank loan – this makes the PMO unwilling to put more into detailed investigations. Jinping is not classified as a poverty county and, under normal circumstances, poor townships (towns) in Jinping would struggle for special government support, making it very hard to find matching funds for the project.[35] Thus the county PMO is more willing to cooperate with village forestry farms that have sufficient funds to pay in advance. This is a primary constraint on promoting the participation of farmers. The participating units reimburse the World Bank funds after planting and checking. Those individual householders or village forest farms that cannot pay in advance for planting find it difficult to participate in the project and the problem is compounded by the difficulties the PMO has in collecting monies from individual farmers. Usually wealthy farms are controlled by the village leader or village Party secretary and decisions about participation in the project are determined by leaders rather than farmers. Furthermore, because local resources are severely constrained, it is not uncommon for afforestation loans to be used for capital circulation, with reimbursement delayed for six to twelve months.

Women's participation While the Women's Federation assisted in the establishment of a 'women's forestry farm' in order to motivate more women to participate in forestry production activities, it did not participate in the CFA and other forestry activities of the PMO. Even in the trial there were no women involved in these activities. Gender awareness remains very weak – the PMO staff are aware that women undertook many of the tree-planting activities and managed the economic part of the process, but they did not give them training, presuming that the training would be ineffective because women are less educated than men. However, one of the problems with focusing on male householders was that once information had been brought back to the home, invariably there was a

'Chinese whispers effect', with information being lost or changed. For example, men were supplied with training on fruit tree pruning, and the fact that this activity is in practice undertaken by women was ignored.

Villagers' participation The community received information and was, in part, consulted. The PMO worked with (and informed) the community during the community forestry assessment phase, reducing the level of conflict relating to land tenure and management. During the implementation phase, the village forestry farm signed a contract with the villagers, whereby the villagers will receive a payment for labour contribution and land share. Noticeably, the land share varied greatly. It represented 20–50 per cent of net income for the villagers and 50–80 per cent for the management group.

Indigenous knowledge The county PMO recognized the value of indigenous knowledge in forestry production. Land clearance is decided according to soil quality and the type of tree species – information which comes from village regulations and folk agreements adopted to manage forestry production. The government usually required the villagers to burn barren land in order to plant seedlings. The villagers recognized that this brought good results on some land, but was less successful in other areas. In most cases, the PMO staff allowed the villagers to draw on this knowledge and adjust these requirements. In Guizhou, village regulations and folk agreements are very effective in village management. For example, in Jingping County, the penalty for cutting down a tree is that the violator must kill one pig to entertain the whole village. The heavy price ensures that it is a regulation the villagers obey.

Sector cooperation The PMO functions independently and effective interaction with related departments is lacking. The auditing bureau is solely responsible for auditing work, the financial bureau only channels finance. The Women's Federation also works separately. Typically, funds are reallocated to other purposes because local finances are limited.

Project targeting While poverty reduction is an objective of the project, because of the difficulties of loan recovery in poor villages the project has focused on villages that are not so poor in the first instance. This has served to undermine one of the original project objectives.

Inadequate staff Each administrative village required 8–10 days of activities, and 32 villages were included in the project. Inevitably, insufficient staff numbers limited coverage.

Higher levels of administration

Traditional attitudes Most government officials are accustomed to the promotion of large-scale forestry production and have no incentive to develop small-scale and scattered production. These conventional attitudes constrained the efficacy

of the project and hindered the achievement of project goals. Although government officials may have listened to the opinions of village leaders, women and other marginalized groups were largely ignored as government officials placed their own concerns above those of the villagers. The PMO staff are too conditioned to working as project technicians rather than as facilitators. They do not realize the importance of community development and people-centred ideas, and are unfamiliar with technology extension. The staff did however, become aware of (and sensitive to) a government project ('Transforming Farmland into Forestland') that emphasized farmers' participation.

Charges and taxation Charges and taxation are as high as 50–60 per cent, and have a significant effect on the financial viability of villagers' loans. This has increased the pressure on the PMO.

Natural forest protection programme The logging ban enforced in natural forest protection areas means that forestry field extension workers are forced to think more about income for their own survival.[36] This serves to reduce their energy and motivation to learn more about CFA, a programme which demands additional input from them.

Lack of training Usually, forestry officials receive training only in forestry law enforcement and not in technologies. The deputy director of the county PMO has received only five training opportunities (one in this project). Field extension workers in the county PMO receive fewer chances. The township (town) leaders attended the CFA training, but they didn't participate in CFA activities.

Motivation and attitudes of local forestry officials Forestry officials earn the lowest salaries among officials and they usually occupy the worst office in the township. Typically they have no transport (not even a bicycle) and no subsidy for travel to villages. They use their own bicycles or motorcycles and pay for running costs themselves. They all seek transfers to other posts.

The government gives more support to the provincial, prefecture and county forestry sector, but the support in county and township is very limited. There are only one or two staff in Dunzhai forestry station, and they have very few opportunities to study outside. They were not included in the CFA training.

Roles and responsibilities of forestry officials The township foresters (including other staff) are often called upon to conduct other urgent activities. For example, family planning activities or tax collection may account for 30–60 per cent of their time. Their responsibilities and roles are often confused, with most foresters having dual roles: one forester in Pingqiu township is also a cashier, another is also a township secretary.

Because PMO staff are very busy and used to being on call for urgent tasks, they found it difficult to call upon all the participants to finish the forestry production activities (seedling planting, fertilizer and pesticide application, pruning) in a short and urgent time. They were not aware that a participatory approach requires staff at the outset to motivate and organize the villagers.

Fieldwork staff experiences According to one field-worker who once worked in a township forestry station, the government encouraged villagers to conduct afforestation activities. After he had checked that the work had been done they were paid. But there were 2200 households:[37] it took him one month to check from one house to another, and as a result he did not want to accept CFA in this project.

Attitudes towards poor farmers The PMO staff regard villagers as less-educated and unable to contribute to development. They see them as passive beneficiaries. Familiar with the villagers in their areas, the PMO staff felt that they could extrapolate needs from one village to the next and did not approach all villagers for ideas and views. They were not aware that the villagers' participation in the design phase was important (as it lays the foundation for their participation and contribution in the rest of the project).

Factors Affecting Community Participation

Government inefficiencies

A key factor highlighted in the case studies was the issue of overstaffing brought about by a rapid increase in recruitment. This has led to a high demand for revenue to support staff, and inevitably to higher taxes and prices for forest products. Overstaffing has also contributed to a centralization of forest management and leaves less space for community participation. Financial constraints also reduce the political will for decentralizing forestry management, especially in an environment where the stability of society is a major political concern.

Incomplete and shifting land-use rights

Frequent changes in land-use rights In less than 50 years, there have been five large reforms governing the land-use rights of forest land. The transformation of this system – at a rate more rapid than the natural growth cycle of forest trees – has undermined people's faith in the policy context and limits the effectiveness of change. Evidence suggests that frequent changes in forest land-use rights affect farmers' attitudes, result in further destruction of the forests and lead to reduced confidence in property ownership and less interest in forest management. Farmers have a saying: 'To be rich first and quickly is our thought, stable policy is our wish.'

Weak framework for land-use rights Despite the changes in the system of forestry land-use rights, a number of critical problems remain unresolved. These include the use of 'virtual property rights' as the system of defining land-use rights, that land-use rights are incomplete, that other relevant policies are not specific and do not provide clarity (ownership of trees and forests is fragmented and ambiguous, for example), and that policy is misinterpreted by local-level officials.

Ambiguous rights of management for forests and forest land The rights of management of forest land include control over when and what is planted. In many rural areas regulations contain the words 'forbid' and 'ban' and farmers are forced to plant specific species or purchase specific seedlings against their wishes. They are often charged regardless of their wishes. However, if farmers do get involved in the process it is not clear who owns the trees once they are planted, how they will be managed, or who will monitor the suitability of the seedlings.

Planning versus participatory processes Local authorities dampen farmer enthusiasm to participate in projects aimed at strengthening forest management. The senior officials in Hunan and Inner Mongolia explained repeatedly that 'a unified layout, afforestation and management strategy is considered a core requirement for the success of plantation and forests management'. Yet such blueprints are not necessarily convergent with the participatory approach of the CFA methodology. The conflict between the need for planning forestry planting and enabling farmers to determine when or what they plant is not resolved. In many places, local authorities issued a policy that the rights to forest land use will be revoked if bare mountains are not planted within a three-year period. There has been less concern for analysis of the kinds of constraints farmers face and the form of assistance that can be provided.

Right of access In some areas, there has been insufficient analysis of the existing utilization of natural resources by communities. Who is using the resources? Has the environment affected or impacted upon users, in particular upon the poor? Most bare mountains are actually used as rangeland, rest places, places for collecting timber and places for collecting non-wood forest products. Afforestation can impair the right of access of community members.

Right of transfer China's Forestry Law defines who owns forest land, and allows for the 'inheritance' and 'transfer' of forest resources. It defines what comprises forestry resources owned by the state – including forests, trees and forest land, as well as all animal and plant resources within forested areas. The law states that the trees owned and the forest land used by individuals should be registered by local people's governments at the county level and above, which, following verification, will issue certificates to confirm ownership or right of use. The law thus refers to different types of ownership – state, collective and individual – without clearly defining the 'individual' category. This has led to difficulties in some areas, with 'double ownership' being claimed, leading to conflicts between groups of farmers. This situation is not helped by the insistence in China's Civil Law that individual interests should be subordinated to national interests.

Limitations of the existing strategy for forestry development

At the local level, the existing Forestry Development Strategy does little to explain how the resources of civil society can be mobilized (eg, volunteering to plant trees) and how the motivation of the local levels of government can be developed. The enforcement of policies and regulations is inadequately defined.

The purpose of these policies is to protect forest resources but there is little clarity over how forests are to be administered and monitored (eg, cutting quotas, timber checking and disease and pest quarantine). This is exacerbated by a lack of understanding of the policies and misinterpretation in their implementation. In Hunan Province, the director of the local forestry bureau said,

> *'Many of the regulations made by the central government of China were misunderstood by the local executive persons. They will monopolize information resources and execute the regulations based on their own understanding. Thus, almost every regulation aimed at the peasantry will puzzle the son of the soil.'*[38]

Villages, townships and counties compete enthusiastically for donor projects. Projects extend financial resources significantly (and are often accompanied by support from central and local government). For officials in local levels of government, a donor project means funding that generally doesn't have to be paid back for the duration of the leader's term. This has led to a focus on projects rather than policy. In order to complete projects, forestry departments are often concerned with internal charging by upper departments (such as the forest reforestation fund), and other logistical difficulties. While forestry offices may have been keen to apply and implement projects in a participatory way, there is no incentive to do so.

High levels of forestry taxation

Forestry charges and taxation amount to approximately 50 per cent of timber value. This results in low profits or even losses for forestry farmers, farms and timber companies. Figure 5.4 illustrates the forestry taxation and charges in the case study areas based on the timber price sold to intermediaries (at the nearby harvesting sites). Forestry taxation and charges comprise three parts. Government taxation, which is established by the State Fiscal and Taxation Authority with the approval of the State People's Congress, makes up 40 per cent of the total rate. Legal charges – set up by the State Forestry Administration with the approval of the State Council, and by provincial authorities with the approval of provincial people's congresses – make up about 55 per cent of total rate. The other charges are recognized illegal charges and are generally established by the county authority. These make up about 5 per cent of the total rate.

High taxation and charging reduce incentives for householders to invest and participate in forest management. In one village in Jiangxi Province, when asked if he wanted to plant trees, an elderly man responded, 'That is the government's job… I would like to join if the government organized [it].'

Weak capacity of external institutions

Capacity and incentives

Programme staff who are given responsibility for community participation at the provincial or county level are more able to accept project implementation than

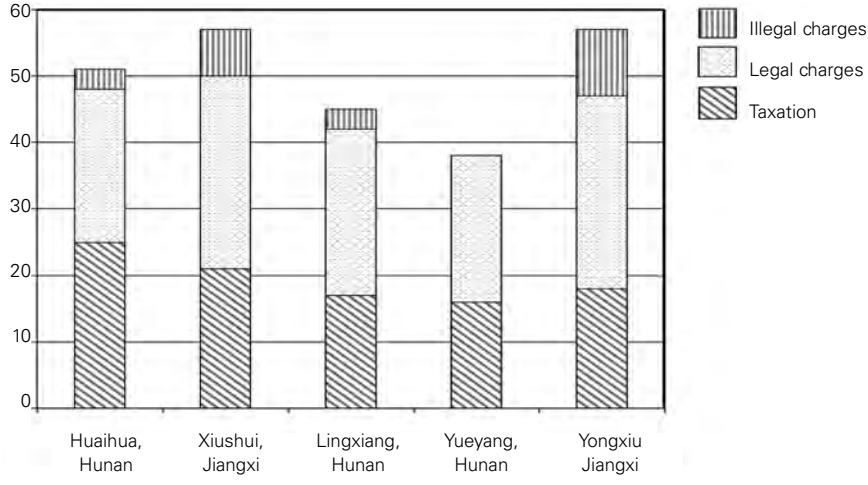


Figure 5.4 *Status of forestry taxation and charges (%) (by % timber value sale to intermediary)*

officials at lower levels of government: their performance is monitored in relation to their role in facilitating community participation, and consequently they accept the idea of community participation more easily.

Conventional approaches

Senior forestry officials, however, are accustomed to working within a conventional system of top-down planning. Most lack knowledge of the benefits, methods and requirements of community participation and few have any experience of working with community groups. It is difficult for them to envisage the need for internal change, to develop the necessary structures and incentives, or understand the capacity building that is necessary for their staff (at project/county and village level) to undertake project identification, planning, design, implementation and evaluation using participatory processes. This lack of leadership has a significant effect at the local level. Without systematic training and capacity building amongst officials and local-level organizations, the participatory project depends on the support of external specialists.

Procedural requirements

Section departments are accustomed to working with highly bureaucratic procedures formulated to implement top-down projects. While some procedures are burdensome for local-level officials and stand in contrast to the process nature of participatory projects, they formalize the participatory process and can be used to convey a way of doing things, binding the lower-level programme offices to

manage their roles. This has both positive and negative consequences – reducing adaptability at the local level, but nevertheless guiding unskilled officials towards a participatory approach.

Building a comprehensive process of participation over time

Participatory development requires institutional reform and change in prevailing attitudes, but these changes are difficult to realize over a short time period. Because participatory development is a relatively new concept, and has been donor-driven, many organizations and individuals have labelled their work 'participatory' without any change in behaviour and attitudes. Development funding agencies often pay attention to the participation of the community during programme implementation, but overlook the participation of programme staff, particularly those in the field. Partnership is needed not only between the external development agents and target groups, but also between the relevant departments and stakeholders.

Cultural context

In the past, particularly in poor regions, most governments and officials expected outsiders to provide the money and technology to assist them in performing their functions. They did not expect these efforts to support structural and ideological change to the existing delivery process – especially when those changes are seemingly invisible and intangible.

The domestication of the participatory approach in China is in fact a process of integration into Chinese culture, rather than the improvement of methodologies such as PRA or the refinement of tools to suit the capability of the local people. Most of the rural development programmes promoting participation have included methods and operating procedures designed by international specialists, and have led, inevitably, to some degree of discord with the local conditions. But the Chinese context is itself not homogeneous. The multiplicity of cultures at a regional level and the diversity of natural, social and economic conditions mean that this domestication requires not only national but also regional stylization. Dogma in relation to methodologies is irrelevant when considered beside the need for a contextualization of the approaches.

Contradictory approaches for monitoring and evaluation

The goal of the majority of institutions (particularly funding agencies) and individuals engaged in participatory activity and participatory programmes is to establish participation throughout the process of development.

Traditional quantitative criteria, such as number of trees planted or distance of road built, may still describe the outputs of development programmes but are not able to define the participation that is sought or achieved. Only a few programmes, like farming schools and the training of peasants as forestry extension workers or community workers, include empowerment and capacity building at community level. The latter is seldom included in projects financed through loans

BOX 5.6 THE INFLUENCE OF LOCAL CULTURE ON THE SINO-GERMAN PROJECTS

In the initial stages of the Sino-German participatory programme, the project authorities asked to be provided with guidelines presenting a step-by-step process for reaching the participatory target, so that local officials could be instructed to follow them. In a subsequent project review, it was clear that staff had followed the written instructions but had missed their spirit. A better way to do this may have been to explain the principles of participatory approaches to senior project officials, mentioning that guidelines could be provided after review of the programme document, acknowledgement of the target area situation and consultation with local project staff and farmers (even if they felt uncooperative).

Unfortunately, project-related sectors, including some consultancies in participatory development and funding agencies, have a strong belief in detailing rules and guidelines. A very fine document (obviously copied) on participatory methods is taken as an indication that the project is employing 'good' participatory approaches. Yet in practice, the participatory process is a flexible and endless process of learning for everyone, including professionals, in participatory approaches.

(eg, the World Bank project) and is even lacking in those programmes financed through grants. Moreover, among those that have such resources, evidence suggests that they are often used for other purposes during the implementation of the programme (eg, the Sino-German projects).

High implementation costs

The additional resources needed to support the successful introduction of a participatory approach are not given sufficient priority. This is a particular issue in projects financed through loans and may be caused by a number of factors including:

- a lack of understanding by the funding agency of the environmental, social, economic and cultural implications of a participatory process; and/or
- failure of the implementing institutions – in order to win the bid for a programme quickly – to look into the specifics of the programme agreement and the possible difficulties that might be encountered during implementation.

Capacity Constraints and Capacity Building

Staff behaviour and attitudes

Bringing about change to staff and community attitudes and behaviour has proved to be the most difficult aspect of establishing sustainable community participation in forestry projects. Even though ancient and contemporary Chinese history provides evidence of participatory processes and practices[39] it is

BOX 5.7 BEHAVIOUR AND ATTITUDES

During a visit to an afforestation programme in a county in Jiangxi Province, a high-ranking officer of the county forestry bureau pointed out that it is clearly impossible for the public to participate actively in afforestation. The government departments consider that afforestation is a job of the government!

In the same county a participatory survey found that at least 90 per cent of the farmers in the village would like to participate in the Sino-German afforestation programme, much to the surprise of the forest officer mentioned above. In the same village, a small afforestation project was implemented under government administration. However, even with the same favourable participatory approaches, the public was reluctant to contract the land for planting trees individually or collectively. The reason for this was the low survival rate of the planted trees and other problems such as disputes about payment for the planting work. Devolution of authority and decision-making powers to lower levels has been limited (as seen in the World Bank cases) and most community decisions continue to be made centrally.

true that the behaviour and attitudes of local foresters determines their relationships with local people. Many need to recognize the knowledge and skills of the local community and to learn to collaborate with local people. They need to be learners rather than leaders or 'elm givers'. The existing relationship has led to a lack of trust and a high level of scepticism about forestry departments and technical units. In extreme cases, villagers do not believe any promise made by the forestry authorities. In such instances, forestry agents have to learn how the forestry government and technical units need to change. They need to show patience, allow villagers to express their problems and grievances, and spend time gaining villagers' trust. Chinese peasants are very hard-working and kind-hearted. Outsiders can gain villagers' trust if they show the same kind will as the peasants and the same honest attitudes.

Evidence suggests that a number of misunderstandings have occurred during the introduction of participatory approaches in China, particularly during the implementation stage. Many programme officers still doubt the capability of the local people. Through statements such as 'local people lack knowledge', 'local people are uncivilized', 'the present poor households used to be tenant peasants in the past', they display their attitudes and the need for better understanding of local people's lives, problems, capacities and visions.

During the farmers' consultation seminar on community participation, bringing any degree of equity to the meeting has turned out to be a very difficult exercise, with leaders often occupying important positions and controlling proceedings. Their high status seems to make it difficult for them to step down a level to talk heart-to-heart with farmers, communicating and negotiating on how to manage community forestry resources.

Usually, one member of the township staff is responsible for several villages, visiting each every week. Often there is no time to return to the office between these visits and the hospitality of the village leader may be accepted before the township staff member moves on; they may have lunch at the village leader's house, for example. They are accustomed to gathering information from the

BOX 5.8 AN EVALUATION OF COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION BY FORESTRY FIELD EXTENSION WORKERS

The table below is an output of a seminar in participatory methods attended by the Sino-German afforestation programme staff. Representatives listed their own perceptions of the advantages of community participation and then a consensus was reached in a group discussion.

Scope	*Remark*
Effectiveness	1 Increasing ownership by farmers of decision-making for afforestation activities and benefit sharing 2 Developing a partnership between farmers and government through changing governmental institutional and personal behaviour 3 Enhancing project publicity and information dissemination 4 Improving farmers' enthusiasm for and awareness of afforestation 5 Improving the professional level of working staff and forestry field extension workers
Efficiency	1 Improving afforestation technology, and selecting suitable species for the sites 2 Improve the survival rate of afforestation

It is clear that the forestry field extension workers understood that respecting the right of the farmer to make and take decisions is fundamental to motivating farmers to participate. This includes respecting farmers' desires, hearing their opinions, defining obligations and rights and advocating equality between people. Noticeable is the instrumental, project-based, nature of the objectives and the lack of any reference to the empowerment of the poor. The importance of this information lies in its reflection of the difficulties faced by the forestry development staff in knowing how to encourage farmers to take part and to bring their skills and capability into play.

leaders and in poor areas the village leader may help with awkward tasks such as tax collection. As a consequence, however, their contact and relationship with villagers can be very limited. Some villagers don't want to meet the staff, thinking they have come to collect tax. They lock their doors when they see the staff approaching. This attitude and perception of the role and behaviour of forestry staff is deeply engrained in villagers' attitudes. Building ownership and trust is a long-term process that will require the best efforts of all forestry staff, but also requires the separation of tasks relating to participation from the enforcement functions that they frequently perform.

Leadership

Leaders in forestry departments are accustomed to using their status and the power of government to influence forestry development. They generally have a way of thinking and doing that has been carried over from the days of a centrally planned economy. They tend only to be concerned with the physical: the number of holes required for tree planting; the hours of labour required to undertake the

BOX 5.9 THE ROLE OF LEADERS IN COMMUNITY FORESTRY ASSESSMENT

The county leaders (particularly the group leader) are very important in scaling-up participatory work. The key question is how to make them realize the importance of participation. One technique that can be quite effective is the organization of a study tour to a successful project site. Another is taking advantage of influential outsiders who can be employed as advocates. Without the support of leaders, it is very difficult to adopt a participatory approach. One PMO director stated that 'if the county leader requires you to do so, you should obey'. If a well-known outsider who is familiar with participation can be harnessed to advocate that the county should adopt CFA, it motivates county leaders to look for effective results.

task; the act of organizing and managing the logistics for achieving the project goal. They are not accustomed to community building and don't understand that the key ingredient of the success or failure of forestry management is people and not materials.

Knowledge and skills

Most forestry organizations lack the appropriate skills for the implementation of community participation projects in forest management. Specifically, inadequate attention is given to building skills and knowledge in the areas of social science, economics, policy analysis and organizational management. The officials tend to have technical skills. They lack the communication, negotiation, conflict resolution and facilitation skills that would help them promote effective farmer participation. Very few projects acknowledge the necessity of building skills and knowledge in supporting community participation throughout the project cycle. Apart from the need for attitudinal change and for a new 'consciousness' about participation, as discussed above, the worst aspects of forestry staffing include:

- lack of professional skills;
- weak ability to adopt new technologies;
- inability to grasp new concepts;
- a lack of innovative skills and attitudes;
- a lack of awareness of responsibilities and obligations;
- poor capacity for organization, management and leadership; and
- limited knowledge of the motivation for community forestry management.

Staff policy and practices

There is a lack of interest amongst almost all staff in building and strengthening community-based organizations and promoting participation. There is no mechanism to distinguish those who are dedicated to the process from those who are not. Foresters are not encouraged to experiment and the emphasis is on penalizing failure rather than rewarding success. There are frequent changes in

BOX 5.10 STAFFING ISSUES IN COMMUNITY FORESTRY ASSESSMENT

When the deputy county leader read the CFA manual, he felt it was too complicated to complete and didn't advocate following its requirements. The deputy-director of the PMO also expressed reservations about CFA activities when he participated in CFA training. The trainer from the prefecture agreed to follow the procedure, though in very broad terms. In general these key stakeholders were more accustomed to a traditional top-down approach and didn't understand the importance of CFA. A simplified manual is, therefore, required for practical operation – but will not necessarily affect attitudes.

It was also found during the project that there were not enough forestry field extension workers in the county-level project office to complete CFA in 32 villages in the short time required by the provincial CPO. Furthermore, although provincial leaders received CFA training, most staff did not and participation rates in CFA activities were very low. At township level it was much the same, with limited training opportunities always going to leaders. The deputy-director of the county CPO said that 'It is possible to adopt a participatory approach on a small scale, but it is impossible in more than 30 villages in a short time.' His solution was merely to invite village leaders to the office to discuss forestry development.

In another village, a facilitator from the prefecture at a village meeting ended up seeking answers from county staff, since they could give answers that were quick and easy. Because he had been to this village many times, he thought he could answer questions with his own knowledge and neglected villager participation. Furthermore, staff were used to telling farmers to follow the government's pre-designed activities and were not familiar with soliciting ideas from the villagers.

Most forestry staff who have not participated in intensive participatory projects have a very limited concept of what participation is. One staff member from a provincial department said that 'When they do participatory investigation, they think they are playing games or working as babysitters.' They are reluctant to follow the manual strictly and don't appreciate the value of the villagers' knowledge.

Field visits for villagers and village leaders are rarely organized, leaving villagers unclear about forestry development in other areas and thus willing to follow government instruction. Building the capacity of villages should be part of the work of local government; this has yet to permeate formal thinking and decision-making, however, and officials still force villagers to follow instructions. The whole process remains very problematic.

staff postings, often for administrative or political rather than professional reasons.

Feedback from researchers provides anecdotal evidence that over half of the counties in Jiangxi and Hunnan treated the participation land-use programme in a very structured and formal manner.[40] County-level and village-level officials attach greatest importance to political achievements and promotion; stimulating community participation in forestry management is a relatively low priority.

Forestry field extension workers involved in the farmers' consultation seminar placed heavy emphasis on the project description, but neglected to describe and

BOX 5.11 THE DIFFICULTIES OF DEVELOPING PARTICIPATION IN FORESTRY ACTIVITIES

In a seminar on participatory methods employed in the project forestry field, extension workers detailed difficulties they had encountered. One outcome was the following list of difficulties encountered by forestry field extension workers undertaking afforestation on the Sino-German project in Jiangxi Province.

Problem	*Specific difficulty*
Attitudes towards farmers	• Not willing to participate • Participation restricted by farmers' conception and understanding • Participation is affected by farmers' living standard and farming practice
Attitude towards participatory method	• Large workload, low efficiency in planning and large expenditure • Difficult to organize large numbers • Complicated work procedure • Numerous tasks and wide subject, more difficult to operate • Farmers not knowing how to draw, mapping takes time
Equipment	• Shortage of equipment for extension of techniques such as pinboards, GPS, small tools
Organization and policy	• Differences between work procedures and China's specific situation • Farmers' wishes fully respected; not able to mobilize the interest of county/village; inadequate administrative management
Consultation and technique support	• Disunity exists between consulting experts; • Operational difficulties appearing during the project implementation are not answered in time
Behaviour	• Technicians treated badly
Project implementation	• Seed selection by farmer increases the difficulties during seedling preparation • The planning and design is wasted if only a few counties are involved in the programme
Seed selection	• Native seeds not known by local farmers in the afforestation model

Government officials are often suspicious of forestry management on such a scale, and believe that effective forestry management needs a wide-ranging uniform programme for afforestation, management and protection. However, in the farmers' consultation seminar, farmers who had received forestry land didn't agree, believing tree planting to be a beneficial activity.

explain the actions involved in implementation. Evidence from both Jiangxi and Hunan afforestation projects suggests that this reflects the wishes of line leaders, who want to avoid the unpredictable (eg, revisions to the scope and content of the programme), the potential impact of the expense of participation on funding

or the possibility of 'a lower survival rate of forestry', which would be perceived as failure in the performance of their job.

In Hunan and Jiangxi provinces, participatory workshops were held with senior technical staff from the Sino-German afforestation projects. Of major concern was the lack of incentive for forestry field extension workers to work with farmers, leading to a weak execution of the participatory methodology. Workers complained that in some counties they had not been reimbursed for expenses incurred during field trips for more than one year. Despite this situation, field extension workers felt obliged to do as requested by programme authorities, fearing that otherwise they would lose their jobs.

Another major issue is the multi-tasking that is required of project staff. In the Jinping County project office, 80 per cent of staff work on forestry activities each day, spending over half their time on issues related to checking and enforcement of the law (such as tax collection and management). In township stations, the roles and responsibilities of the two to three foresters are not clear, with 30–60 per cent of their work time being devoted to other government tasks (eg, family planning activities and taxation imposition).

Financial constraints

Financial constraints at the county and village levels of government have often led to project funding allocated for forestry development (including forestry cultivation funding and programme funding), being diverted to pay staff salaries and benefits and to cover administrative overheads and operational costs (see Box 5.12).

BOX 5.12 FINANCIAL DEFICIT IN TOWNSHIP FORESTRY STATIONS

In Yueyang County, Hunan Province, township forestry stations used to be aligned under the county forestry bureau. In 1998 this changed, as township forestry stations were placed under township governments. The township forestry station could keep income from forestry charges, except an element that was to be transferred to the provincial and prefecture forestry authority. In Lujiao township forestry station, almost half the income generated through forestry charges was used for salaries and office maintenance.

Organizational issues

Key organizational issues include:

- overstaffing at county level, resulting in an inefficient organization;
- unsound organizational structure at the village level;
- overstaffing in local forestry agencies;
- insufficient financial resources, resulting in a heavy reliance on funding and revenue from forestry development funding to maintain normal operation;

- lack of a structured training programme for staff and no guarantee of on-the-job training for staff;
- individual staff members have solid but narrow technical backgrounds but limited knowledge of project management, social and economic affairs, etc;
- lack of effective human resource policy and management;
- management procedures are hierarchical and uncoordinated;
- poorly defined roles and responsibilities, and unclear objectives unrelated to a strategy outlining change;
- lack of departmental coordination.

Proposed capacity building

With most internationally financed forestry development programmes now dependent upon the adoption of a participatory approach, it is inevitable that an increasing number of organizations and programmes will accept the principles and ideas of a participatory approach. But in order to address the capacity deficiencies and constraints outlined in this section and illustrated in the cases, a number of specific activities are proposed in relation to organization, training, attitudes and the legislative environment.

Organization and institutions

The organization of the participatory process is actually a process of institutional development; it needs time and the development of human resources. The implementation of a participatory programme requires the building of a new team and is dependent on whether this is successfully achieved. Many unsuccessful participatory programmes have failed because the importance of institutionalizing the process was not recognized; and because there was an assumption that the collaborating institutions would simply follow the agreement to use participatory processes specified in formal agreements. This type of programme/project development, ironically, does not respect stakeholder participation as the mode of working – it is not practising what it preaches!

Similarly, institutions involved at a project level need to be encouraged through safeguards and incentives to become partners of the target community, not just static bodies. For most ongoing participatory programmes in China this is not the case. Funding agencies, through formal agreements, often require Chinese collaborating institutions to adopt participatory approaches without consideration of whether the Chinese institutions have any institutionalized guarantee of a collaborative partnership or motive for participation. In the light of this, recommendations are as follows:

- Define or re-emphasize (in a mission statement) the responsibilities and objectives of forestry institutions, specifically including community participation.
- Set out a strategy and action plan to bring about the functional transformation of village-level offices that enables the participatory mechanism to be mainstreamed at the implementation level.

- Simplify institutional requirements and procedures to improve efficiency in line with the objective of increasing the involvement of farmers in development processes.
- Formulate incentive and engagement mechanisms for personnel management and human resource cultivation, enhancing consciousness of responsibility for and service to communities and rural foresters.

On the basis of the above description and analysis, capacity building of the local functional departments and personnel should be implemented with attention to the following:

- providing the necessary financial resources to ensure staff's on-the-job training in participation and the eliciting of community knowledge;
- providing appropriate and expert technical support;
- organizing the new team on which success or failure depends.

Staff training

The quality of staff should be improved and capacity increased through training that focuses on:

- developing the capacity of staff in relation to new technologies;
- skills training in participatory methodologies;
- training and refresher courses in professional technology;
- the development of management and leadership skills for effective organization.

Awareness and attitudes

A better understanding of the spirit of participation should be developed and the need for significant attitudinal and behavioural change amongst forestry staff addressed through:

- training events, exposure and hands-on experience in implementing community participatory methods and techniques;
- disseminating information on the concepts and practices of community participation;
- launching initiatives to increase awareness;
- promoting a contextual approach to community participation that addresses the political, institutional and cultural context of China.

Legislative and policy framework

There is a need to enhance the local legislative framework and enforcement capacity whilst strengthening the community role in forest management. Attention should be paid to village rules and customs (traditionally very efficient in forest areas in China) and promoting community participation in forest management.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Twenty years of economic transformation and system reform in China have eliminated some of the institutional barriers to the development of effective community participation in forestry management. The shift towards a socialist market economy will require institutions to become market-oriented and accountable to their customers, rather than functioning as agencies for the implementation of government policy. The households, as the basic managing and decision-making units, are the new customers. A market-oriented institutional framework meeting farmers' needs is the proper policy environment for dissemination of the participatory approach. In relation to participation in development activities, an important outcome of this process has been an increased awareness in local government of the importance of farmers and communities in forestry development. Despite this, community participation in forestry resource management in China is still driven, not by the internal power of local government, but by the international community through development and technical support programmes. As a result, significant institutional barriers remain.

Local-level forestry agencies are accustomed to top-down forms of decision-making. There are also serious deficiencies in staff and organizational capacity at almost all levels. Midway through the reform process, the system of forestry land ownership remains unresolved and forestry suffers from a disproportionate burden of taxation and from inappropriate management policies.

Bringing about sustainable community participation on a significant scale calls for a new development strategy. It is necessary to develop such a strategy gradually – step by step – and not suddenly to tear down one system and set up a new one. The process needs to be internalized. This need for gradual change is particularly pertinent in the light of the long-term production cycles associated with forestry management. It is necessary to develop the strategy at the grass roots in small initiatives, and then to replicate these achievements on a larger scale. Significant attitudinal change and skills development is required. It is necessary to allow time for all stakeholders, including governmental officials, technicians, and professionals, to learn, interact, debate and think; and it is necessary to install funding mechanisms that support the development of the community role and the capacity of all stakeholders to this end.

It is a long process, and given the nature of participation as a process, endless. This process needs to be given greater prominence, and evaluations should include all the benefits of the involvement of households and communities, such as the benefits of women's participation, of self-help organization, and of farmers' making decisions over both policy and practical issues.

In recent years, agencies for the promotion of participatory development and dissemination have sprouted like bamboo shoots after the spring rain. Some of these are formal organizations and some are informal networks. The process of institutionalizing the whole concept of participation reflects the principles of market growth. The founders of these organizations are, in the main, enthusiastic practitioners of participatory development; and institutions and individuals engaged in participatory development rely on a market (demand-driven)

environment. At present their funds and resources come from technical support from the international development cooperation programmes being implemented in China, but with the deepening of the reform and the opening of policy in China, the market conditions required for participatory development will continue to improve.

The continuous process of policy and institutional change, as well as economic reform, will undoubtedly improve the environment for the replication of participatory processes. At the same time, the participatory approaches widely used today are based on traditional institutions for planning and decision-making in communities and cultures with a collective ownership of common property resources. This is a fundamental aspect of participation in China and is vital to ensuring that groups are not marginalized in the modernization process. This represents an opportunity for mutual learning – where the East and the West, the old and the new, and the traditional and the modern can come together to make a joint contribution to development in China.

Ongoing local evaluations of participatory development, theory and methodology will ensure that it is improved and developed in the Chinese context. Participatory action is a realm for all individuals but it is an ideal and can only be undertaken as a long and gradual process. Participatory action should never be impetuous, and it is essential that it is realistic. Most importantly, it should continue 'along a path of thousands of miles, reading thousands of books and meeting thousands of kinds of people'. In this way the foundations will be laid. Participation is not the only strategy for sustainable forestry management. However, without participatory processes, all efforts and strategies for sustainable forestry management will be difficult to realize.

Notes

1 With contributions from Zhang Minxing, Nanjing Forestry University; Zuo Ting, China Agricultural University; and Jiang Chunqian, Chinese Academy of Forestry.
2 Following the Kunming workshop, a multidisciplinary research team was established, bringing together members from a range of different research institutions. These include Liu Jinlong (team coordinator), Wu Junqi, Jiang Chunqian from the Chinese Academy of Forestry, Zhou Pidong, Yuan Juanwen from Guizhou Integrated Rural Development Centre, Zuo Ting from the Centre for Integrated Agriculture Development and Zhang Mingxin from Nanjing Forestry University. Approaches adopted by research team members included a literature review, a field-work stage utilizing participatory information collection methods and group reporting through workshop discussions.
3 SFA, 2000a.
4 Fifth National Forest Resource Inventory (1994–1998). SFA, 2000a.
5 State Environment Protection Bureau, 1999.
6 See page 99 of this chapter.
7 It should be noted that while the SFA is the principal government institution responsible for forestry, other central institutions with interests in forests include the Ministry of Agriculture, the Ministry of Water Resources and the State Environmental Protection Agency. In certain areas, mandates overlap and conflicting regulations and/or guidelines have been issued.

8 A prefecture is an administrative unit that may itself control counties, townships, villages and large areas of forests.
9 Major investment for forestry development is from governmental funds. Since 1998, when the Natural Forest Protection Programme (NFPP) was initiated, over 60 per cent of funds for forestry investment has come from government sources, in which the share from central government is increasing.
10 Ye Jinzhong and Liu Jinlong, 2000.
11 Liu Jinlong, 1997.
12 For instance, one article in the 'Forest Law' states that the local forestry agency is authorized to take back forest land user rights if the contractor fails to afforest land within a certain timeframe. Local governments in some areas interpreted this to mean that if the owner of the rights to land use cannot afforest his/her barren area in three years, the land owner (in most cases the collectives) could terminate the contract and contract with another.
13 Liu Jinlong, 2000.
14 'The Forest Law of The People's Republic of China' was enacted in 1984 and amended in 1998. In China at national level, there are several laws relevant to forest development but implemented by other government sectors, eg, 'the Water Law' (Ministry of Water Resources), 'the Land Law' (Ministry of Land Resources), 'the Agriculture Law' and 'the Pasture Law' (Ministry of Agriculture). SFA is authorized to implement 'the Law of Desertification Control and Management'.
15 These include 'China's Ecological Environmental Plan' (1998), 'China's Forestry Development Plan' (SFA, 2000a) and also the relevant provincial planning programmes in western China – 'Gansu Provincial Ecological Environmental Plan', for example.
16 'Four kinds of wastelands': wasteland in hills, mountains, along river courses, etc.
17 This programme, commonly called Grain for Green programme, is the largest programme in the National Strategy of Great Western Region Development, as well as the ecological restoration and rural development. In the ten years 2001–10, according to the planning of the programme, use regimes on 1467ha of hill-slope farmland and seriously desertified land will shift to forest and pasture. The central government provides a subsidy, which is 2250kg of grain in South China and 1500kg of grain in North China, and 300 yuan (= US$36) for management annually in the first eight years and 750 yuan for seedling cost in the first year for turning one hectare of farming into ecological forests.
18 'Decision on Several Issues Concerning Establishment of the Socialist Market Economic System', Third Plenary Session of the Fourteenth Communist Party Council Committee, 1993.
19 Figure based on National Forest Resource Inventory, 1994–8. Articles 29–35, Forest Law (1998).
20 Articles 29–35, Forest Law (1998).
21 More commonly known as the 'Green for Grain' programme.
22 SFA, 2000a.
23 'Three Norths': northeast, north and northwest China, where there are semi-arid and arid areas and the evident effects of desertification.
24 To date, KfW has financed around 20 afforestation projects covering some 30–40,000ha of land in 15 provinces and autonomous regions of China to the tune of between $US8–10.5 million.
25 Forestry extension field-workers are referred to as 'technicians' in China.
26 An example is a project in Hubei Province, where land designated for afforestation turned out to be smaller than stated and unterraced, both contrary to stipulations in

the Sino-German project proposal, leading to an extremely problematic implementation. Personal communication with Professor Liu Yonggong, CIAD, 2002.

27 The Ningxia Sino-Afforestation Project, for example, allocated a large fund to level off the land, planning to contract out the land-use right to individual households for orchard development. Very few farmers were included in the shaping of project policy; then, when plans to cultivate pears and apples had been implemented (1994), they were changed to plant jujubes (1996) as the price for pears and apples plummeted. In 1997, the project-implementing body finally acted on the wishes of farmers and planted grapes as the price of jujubes declined.

28 See 'Finance Agreement between Ministry of Finance of People's Republic of China and KfW of Germany' for a desertification project in the Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region.

29 Ye, 2000.

30 Banner: a level of government administration with county-level power and status. It is specifically used in the regions where the dominant ethnic population ie Mongolian.

31 Green for Grain took this position in 2000.

32 Director of Ruichang County Forestry Bureau of Jiangxi province; this judgement was later reinforced by a senior official in the SFA.

33 Desertification control in Inner Mongolia and the 'Grain for Grain' programme in Jiangxi.

34 A recent evaluation of the project – which concluded that it did not achieve this goal – is discussed later in this chapter.

35 The project investment is in two parts, World Bank loan and matching funds. The primary source of matching funds from the Chinese side is the county governments.

36 The Jinping PMO was forced to sell its truck because of financial difficulties.

37 In a township of 4000 mu.

38 See Ye Jinzhong, Liu Jinlong and Lin Zhibin, 2002.

39 In history, in most cases rebels against the emperor of the time instigate poor farmers by a slogan like 'divide up the land of the rich, level off the poor and rich'. Social development should flow 'from the masses and to the masses' (Mao Zedong). In many minority villages, holy forests are well protected by collective action, enhancing the security and prospects of the village, and traditionally the village irrigation and road systems are developed, maintained, and repaired collectively.

40 For example, they only provided a sketch map of land use (not drawn by the farmer), a questionnaire agreed by farmers, and a contract to cope with the necessary programme examination. The choice of seed for afforestation, forestry management, and distribution of benefits are not shared with farmers, either.

6

Building Capacity within Communities: Participatory Natural Resource Management in Southwest China

Ren Xiaodong, Zhao Yaqiao, Su Yufang and Xu Wei [1]

After outlining the importance of local organizations in relation to government policy and grass-roots democracy in China, this chapter presents case studies of three projects, assessing their objectives, activities and impact. We analyse the main barriers to the promotion of community participation in natural resource management and offer recommendations for developing policies to deal with these constraints. We consider the external and internal factors affecting local governance for the promotion of community participation in NRM and examine recent initiatives aimed at providing a positive framework for community participation in the management and protection of natural resources. Our recommendations include ways of empowering local communities to promote community participation.

Research undertaken in recent years has demonstrated that in rural China there remains a strong tradition of top-down decision-making, strongly influencing the actions of both government and local communities. Many poverty alleviation projects have begun to emphasize more bottom-up decision-making processes, laying down the gauntlet to government and farmers. However, while projects have made substantial efforts to strengthen the capacity of government for project implementation through training, they have not offered the same support within local communities, particularly in terms of how to strengthen the capacity of existing organizations to implement and manage projects.

In order to promote and build the capacity of local communities, one needs to begin from the farmers' position, looking at their interests and assessing the roles played in the community by existing formal and informal organizations. It is also important to analyse the power balance of the community, and to review the external environment. With this knowledge, the existing resource base can be utilized for increasing the capacity of communities for sustainable development.

Sustainable rural development in China requires coordinated action at national, provincial and local levels, addressing policy adjustment, strengthening human and institutional capacity, managing natural resources, and using external inputs. Solutions depend on changes in management approaches. These require local community participation for the utilization and management of resources and decision-making. Research and field studies at the local and provincial levels are crucial for detecting and disseminating local solutions to these issues.

Participatory assessments and the use of participatory planning for poverty reduction and NRM have become more prevalent in China in recent years. In this research, three case studies were undertaken in:

- Cao Hai Community, Weining County, Guizhou, focusing on local capacity building;
- Qu County, Sichuan, focusing on participatory community management of forestry resources;
- Da Maha Community, Gen Ma County, Yunnan, focusing on local initiatives in community forestry management.

The Context: Rural Community Development in China

Institutions

China has a socialist market economy governed from the centre by the National People's Congress. Under the State Council, which is the most important body responsible for state administration, government is administered at several levels. Major provincial government departments maintain representative offices in prefecture governments, and, often, also within the county and township government structures. Townships are the lowest level of government in the official administration. Below the townships are village committees, which in turn supervise a number of village groups. Leaders of VCs and VGs receive nominal compensation from the government for their services, whereas employees at township and higher levels receive full salaries.

At village level, there are two important formal organizations: the VC and the village branch of the Chinese Communist Party committee (VBCP). The VC is the main body exercising governmental power in the village, and the VBCP is the representative of political power in the village. They work together to govern in accordance with state laws and regulations. Most of the members of the VC are also members of the VBCP. They normally carry out their governance and administration through the heads of the natural villages, who link them to the villagers. Under the VC, there are a number of government-initiated mass organizations/societies such as the Women's Federation, the Community Security Committee and the Chinese Youth League.

Changing state policies

Since 1950, China has implemented numerous if sometimes conflicting policies affecting ownership and access to both agricultural and forest land. During the

period of collectivism (1958–78), people's communes owned agricultural land, and forest lands were owned either by communes or by the state. During the same period, local governments planned grain production. Lack of government authority during the Cultural Revolution caused a substantial loss of forest, a situation exacerbated by state demands that local people increase grain production for food self-sufficiency, resulting in further land clearance and forest losses.

From 1978 to 1983, under the household responsibility system, agricultural land was contracted out to individual farmers, with forests remaining under state control. Boundaries between state forests and private agricultural lands were not clearly established, and this often caused conflict between government agencies, local collectives and individuals. To stake their claim to contested forest lands, local collectives or individuals sometimes resorted to clearing the land for agricultural purposes, causing further loss of forest cover.

During 1982 and 1983, several provinces implemented the Two Mountains System (freehold and contracted forest lands) with the aim of stabilizing forested areas and getting farming households actively involved in restoring them. The goal of this reform was to shift forest management from the state to the individual household. Under this system, both freehold plots and collectively held forests could be leased to individual households.

Currently, forestry management policy is in a transitional phase, involving:

- a shift from subsistence to a market orientation, with the forest providing not only supplementary needs for food and vegetables, but also cash for income generation;
- a tenancy shift from state to collective or even private ownership, peaking in the implementation of the recent policy on wasteland auction, in which 30 per cent of the forest is state-owned, and 70 per cent collectively owned;
- a shift from an emphasis on production to ecology and the conservation of biological diversity, particularly since the Yangtze River floods of 1998;
- a move from central planning for reforestation to decentralized planning and multi-stakeholder participation;
- a move from monoculture for tree planning to more diversified multi-purpose trees for intercropping and agroforestry;
- a transition from traditional cultural values and beliefs to more contemporary values.

The consequences of these transformations have had a dramatic impact on NRM in rural areas.

China can filter considerable financial and human resources down to villages through a powerful system of quotas transmitted from higher to lower levels. This can work well when the focus is clearly defined and limited. The approach is more successful in construction than at later stages, and usually more effective when activities concern a single sector, rather than inter-relating departments. Although the central government is trying to reorientate itself away from an over-emphasis on central planning to a guidance and assistance system, local government policy remains firmly controlled. A major current concern is coercion at the village level.

Local institutional features

At the local level, a high degree of cultural and ethnic diversity, coupled with physical isolation, has resulted in three distinctive features within local institutions. These have had a significant impact on local resource management.

First, a comparatively strong sense of community still exists in many villages, demonstrated by the functioning of farmers' groups, parents' meetings, churches, Buddhist monasteries, local language schools and various kinship institutions. In addition, in many villages, long-standing community rules governing resource access are still in effect (eg, on mushroom picking, yak grazing and fuelwood collection).

Second, local government agencies tend to be more autonomous and not as closely linked to their provincial government counterparts as in previous years.

Third, recent reforms to support democratization and decentralization are dramatically changing the institutional landscape at the local level. The 'household responsibility system' has shifted the centrally planned and commune-based decision-making process to a household-based level, along with the move from a subsistence to a market-oriented economy. With regard to democracy at the village level, two 1998 landmark laws introduced the democratic election of VCs and village leaders, and placed new responsibilities/rights for managing local natural resources in the hands of VCs. Currently, there are more than 930,000 VCs and more than four million VC members in China, whose election has been supervised by local government officers. Villages have also been given access to and management of responsibilities for collective forests. Typically, these are a few hundred hectares in size, covering low-elevation forest in the proximity of the village.

As a result of these and other recent reforms, every household can retain a greater part of its income, and is exempt from certain agricultural taxes. However, as a consequence, many farming households seek financial advantage only for their families, and have less interest in contributing to the public welfare of their villages.

The disbandment of the agricultural collective resulted in the disintegration of rural administration. Accompanying this process, between 1979 and 1980 groups of VCs began to emerge naturally in Anhui and other provinces, where they filled the gaps in countryside administration and began to provide basic services.

Community Capacity Building in Cao Hai, Guizhou Province

Background

The Cao Hai National Nature Reserve (CNNR) was established in 1992 as one of China's first wetland reserves for the protection of crane and other wintering birds. The Cao Hai community is located within Cao Hai township, in Weining County, an autonomous county formed by the Yi, Hui and Miao minority peoples. In the early 1980s a programme to restore the wetland ecosystem

drained for agriculture in the 1970s took farmland away from communities in Cao Hai, creating serious economic problems for the 33,000 people[2] living within the reserve boundaries. Almost all families in Cao Hai raise domestic animals, and for many farmers, it is a major source of cash income. However, domestic animals present a hazard to the natural environment, as aquatic plants are used for feed, and hillsides are overgrazed. Furthermore, the large number of domestic chickens and ducks bring with them the risk of transmitting disease to wild water birds. Rapid growth in the size of the local population and a decrease in farmland created by lake restoration placed pressure on limited land resources. In recent years, most households have been unable to generate enough income from farming to maintain a basic living. Net per capita income and assets held by households in 1997 were only 75 per cent and 85 per cent of the county average respectively, and grain production only 42 per cent of the county average.

Project background

Objectives and implementation

The Cao Hai project is an attempt to resolve problems faced in nature conservation by focusing on and working with communities living within the geographical boundaries of the Cao Hai nature reserve. Born out of threats to the biodiversity and survival of the reserve caused by the hardship faced by local farmers,[3] the project was intended to go to the source of the problem and address the needs of farmers directly: if they were able to prosper as a result, a model could be developed that might become widely applicable to China's many threatened nature reserves.

The reserve was established to secure safe wintering areas for birds, and used a two-pronged approach in its conservation strategy; the first centred on education of the public in relation to bird protection, bird disease control and feeding; the second focused on enforcement of regulations. However, this approach brought the reserve into conflict with villagers, who had a legitimate right to cultivate their land within the reserve boundaries. Unless they were presented with an alternative way of earning their livelihood, the reserve would be at continuous risk of losing wetlands to agriculture, and from overfishing. Moreover, over-enforcement of regulations would damage relations between officials and villagers. Faced with this challenge, the reserve understood that reducing the villagers' dependence on the land and aiding the provision of alternative income sources could make a strategic contribution to environmental conservation. A recognition by government and managerial agencies of the complexities of managing Cao Hai's ecosystem finally led in 1993 to a collaboration between the Guizhou environmental protection bureau (EPB), the CNNR management, the International Crane Foundation (ICF), the Trickle-Up Programme (TUP), and Cao Hai to implement the integrated community-based conservation and development project.

Initially, the project aimed to:

- provide technical and financial support to farmers;
- help local people find an approach to develop their economy; and

- facilitate an understanding of environmental protection activities among local people.

The project asked farmers to undertake specific actions for environmental protection, broaden their thinking, take part in decision-making, and create for themselves a working plan for environmental protection and development. Economically, this was a search for a project that suited them and satisfied their needs, reducing their passivity and making them more positive and proactive.

Using PRA in its implementation, the project changed and adapted as it progressed. It became more concerned with the integrated development of communities, and focused on local community capacity. In its later stages the project relied more heavily on local organizations to implement and come up with a new project design, demonstrating how important local organizations are to project sustainability.

Design and implementation

In relation to the project's participatory objectives, in 1994 the following strategies were developed for the Cao Hai cooperation project. It aimed to:

- link nature conservation with rural development;
- strengthen cooperation and the capacity of farmers for self-management by giving them a central role in Cao Hai Reserve protection and community development;
- employ a realistic approach to helping local communities alleviate poverty through participatory approaches and by working with individual households; and
- provide training for a team of specialists working at grass-roots level, with the ability to combine theory and practice.

Since its inception in 1994 the Cao Hai Community Trust Fund (CTF) has continued to monitor the participatory approaches adopted in the Cao Hai project. In order to encourage the organization and participation of communities, in the process of its implementation the CTF has urged local people to design, plan, implement, monitor and evaluate the process themselves. Various forms of participation in the project have been designed to ensure that local people can participate fully.

Phases

The project was implemented in three phases, from 1994 to the present, as summarized in Box 6.1.

Conflicts, barriers and compromises

In orthodox poverty alleviation projects, finance is organized in a top-down fashion, through county, township and administrative village levels. Capital goes

BOX 6.1 PHASES OF PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION

First phase of the project (1994–7)

A Project content: A trickle-up approach was adopted for the organization of the CTF. Project components included tree planting, food processing, handcart manufacture and stove making.
B Project partners: The Guizhou EPB, the CNNR, the ICF, the TUP, and the Rural Development Research Centre.
C Project output: The TUP and the CTF were very successful. Through these, local community participation was greatly improved. The local organization (CTF) played an important role in project implementation.
D In problem solving there was a strong focus on poverty alleviation and development of human resources.

Second phase of the project (1998–2001)

A Project content: TUP, CTF, watershed treatment, participatory village planning, construction of water-bird breeding areas, environmental education and dissemination of the Cao Hai approach to other areas with similar problems.
B Project partners: The CNNR, the Guizhou EPB, the Community-based Conservation and Development Research Centre of Guizhou Normal University.
C Project output: The participatory approach was further improved, with participatory village planning and water bird breeding areas designed, planned and maintained by the villagers themselves. Environmental education was initiated, and the CNNR's management skills improved.

Third phase of the project (2002–present)

A Problem solving: A training programme was set up to to disseminate the Cao Hai approach to visitors from other areas.
B Project partners: the CNNR, The Guizhou EPB, the ICF, the Community-based Conservation and Development Research Centre of Guizhou Normal University, the Guizhou Environment Protection Institute, Weining Water and Soil Maintenance Office, the Cao Hai township government.
C Proposed project output: Local people will become the major trainers, providing training for outside trainees. Following the success of the Cao Hai project, other areas in Guizhou will implement a strategy similar to the Cao Hai approach. The local organization will play an important role in sustainable development. Other agencies will take part in the Cao Hai lake protection activities.

to a target village that needs help. In most of the Cao Hai project actions, however, the opposite has been the case, with participation being emphasized. In the process of project implementation, local farmers have played an important role, forming their own management committee. At the beginning of the project farmers had some conflict with local government, but with project implementation both sides had no choice but to strengthen their ties with each other. This is illustrated in the case of Baoma township, for example, where, in order to achieve the renewal of upland into forest, the township government appealed for support from the CNNR, in the hope that the CTF committee would take on a task that was the responsibility of the government. In return, communities would be offered free seed. Here one can see how organized communities can work in partnership with government.

Over time the CNNR has shifted it goals from enforcement of the law and regulations for the preservation of the area's biodiversity to focusing on

community-based conservation and development. This has had a knock-on effect in relation to procedures for implementation. For example, the technical department of the CNNR has focused on the facilitation and coordination of the CTF, the TUP and other development activities, placing great importance on participation in its programme content. Because Cao Hai is so poor, the government has been receptive to grass-roots democracy, facilitating the activities of the CNNR.

Key aspects of participation

The Community Trust Fund

The CTF, a core component of the Cao Hai project, was established in 1995. It was based on the principles of the US-based TUP, and was designed to enable all farmers to receive external support from the ICF, the Guizhou government and the TUP, with the participation of local people as the organizing principle. The CTF greatly enhanced the involvement of local people, who set up their own guidelines for revolving loan funds and user groups. This in turn gave farmers the confidence that they could work together, using their own initiative to solve problems for their communities, undertaking activities beyond the scope of the original project. A couple of villages, for example, arranged their own financing and labour to bring electricity into their homes and to reconstruct village wells for potable water, goals previously unobtainable because the village government lacked the capital. To date, 1499 families have joined the CTF with a total fund of 377,630 yuan. The CTF comprises three types:

1 small group fund: comprising 10–15 families;
2 large group fund: comprising 16–30 families;
3 natural village fund: comprising all families in the natural village.

CNNR management and the local community

At the beginning of 1995, the Rural Development and Research Centre (RDRC) of the Yunnan Institute of Geography was invited to hold a workshop at Cao Hai on PRA. The RDRC worked with the new staff and farmers to decide on:

- a management method for grants;
- how to make sure the loan was repaid;
- where the money would be placed;
- who would decide who receives a loan;
- the conditions of the loan;
- who should receive loans first;
- what interest rates should be applied; and
- the use of special loans.

This project, which involves the use and management of funds, is a long-term process that requires farmers to change their perspectives. Since most villagers

are not accustomed to using and managing funds, the project staff conducted intensive education on the CTF project. They interviewed every family, informing them of their rights of inclusion and participation in the project. On discussing the management of the funding, most farmers agreed that a small group of 10–15 families was an effective size for the use and management of their own separate fund, bringing funding closer to their operations and allowing more group members to take part.

The CNNR summarized villagers' comments and suggestions, and supplied feedback to the villagers. Village representatives then submitted their application and agreed to the CTF regulation of a fingerprint as a means for registering their group. The CNNR processed applications on the basis of the following criteria:

- Did they have a group meeting and receive accurate information from the CNNR/farmer/community administration?
- Did they have management rules for their group?
- How did they plan to participate?
- Did the group choose the group leader, and did the group avoid choosing a domineering person?
- Did the group get together by themselves or were they told to become part of the group?

Project construction

Each of the three CTF groups had its relative advantages. In Haibian, Xihai, Yinlong and Cao Hai village, the smaller CTF group was chosen through discussions amongst villagers. The advantage of this was that members could organize themselves freely, it was easy to review, and there was a highly participatory process. The management committee was selected democratically, with each committee member having a specific work assignment and each having to provide a fair service for its members. At the same time, the workload of those elected to the management committee was heavy, and members needed either some management skills, or training in these skills.

From the beginning of the CTF, the villagers played a major role in the project and were given the opportunity to improve their skill base – gaining experience and confidence from practice. Depending upon the interest rate and the life of a loan, the growth of the fund gives scope for villagers to think about how to work in the market-place, expanding their businesses and investigating new opportunities. Once the fund has expanded, management regulations may require reconsideration, including such factors as the size and amount of loan for each person, the interest rate and the terms of guarantee.

Training

The priority of the Cao Hai cooperative project is the capacity building of local farmers, taking place through training, external visits and communication between villages. Almost every activity requires or involves training. Once a CTF application has been approved, CTF members are invited to attend a compulsory

half-day training from the CNNR. This enables them to understand the objective and meaning of the fund, facilitating their participation, improving fund management and complying with the basic principles of the fund.

Key stakeholders

Primary stakeholders

The nine years since the project's inception have seen villagers change from being supportive to active participants. As their economy has developed, so their social coherence has improved. The self-worth of individual villages has grown as villages have begun to relate to each other, reducing isolationism. Through project implementation and with the establishment of community organization, the skill level of villagers has greatly improved, and they have gradually become a major force for environmental protection in Cao Hai. Through the Cao Hai project and its participatory methodology, behaviour and attitudes have changed considerably. With the support of the local communities the conservation work of the CNNR is now effective and efficient.

The participatory element of the strategy is the most important aspect of the Cao Hai project. The farmers organize themselves into the various forms of organization available, and select the fund management committee. The farmers decide the period of loan payment, the amount of the loan, and the interest rate. Fund management is also monitored and evaluated by the farmers themselves.

Trusting farmers, and having a belief in their ability, is important. Project staff seldom intervene in the CTF, or give instructions to the villagers. This lack of interference has meant that the local community has had the space to develop its skill base voluntarily, building in confidence without intrusion. From the earliest stage, villagers have played a central role, as they are presented with the opportunity to learn management skills and gain real project experience. In later stages, they have been given the right to work in project planning, design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation. The leadership of the fund management committee has been encouraged and recognized by villagers.

Secondary stakeholders

Table 6.1 identifies the key secondary stakeholders in the project: The use of participation in an environmental protection project was a first for both the ICF and the TUP, and was regarded as an innovative means of operation and implementation.

The administrative department of the CNNR has acknowledged that participation is an effective means of securing environmental protection, in both the promotion of nature reserves and the development of surrounding communities. The Rural Development Research Centre of Yunnan concluded recently that the project has provided many lessons and experiences in using participatory methods in development projects.

Despite these gains, however, the county, township and administrative governments were not particularly involved in or supportive of participation.

Table 6.1 *The function of institutions and organizations in CTF*

Institutions and organizations	*Functions*
Management committee of CTF	Managing the CTF and communicating with project staff
The CNNR management	Project design, coordination, implementation and training for villagers
The ICF	Project design, donor, monitoring and evaluation
The TUP	Donor
The Guizhou EPB	Project organizer
Guizhou provincial government	Donor
Rural Development Research Centre of Yunnan	Project design, training for project staff

They argued that a participatory approach would increase operational costs, and would require more time and energy. Further, there was a fear that power could be wrested from village leaders as the benefits of participation spread around the village.

Decision-making in local government in Cao Hai is top-down, and this has left its mark on government officials. On one hand they don't have experience of working with local people, and on the other there is an underlying fear that if they employ a PRA approach, they will lose their influence. Despite this fear, training and actually seeing the project working have stimulated a degree of interest in the new methodology. If this can be harnessed for poverty assessment, it could lead to greater empowerment of local communities for project management, monitoring and implementation. The attitude and behavioural change of government officers is thus a crucial factor in the utilization of PRA in rural areas.

Skills training

Training continues to play a key role in keeping the CTF running smoothly. Once a course of action has been approved, the CNNR conducts training sessions to improve the skills of CTF members. Project staff are selected from local managerial agencies, and others are sent for external training. The Cao Hai project's focus on strengthening the skill capacity of staff and villagers at grassroots level has brought benefits. In addition to training for the CTF, each natural village implementing the CTF selects a coordinator to communicate with the CNNR every two months. The CTF committee leaders and accountants are invited to attend a symposium to share their experiences, the lessons learned and the problems encountered.

User diversification

In Cao Hai, the CTF promoted the development of local organizations, identifying when and how capacity building was required. Continued post-project

development took place through facilitating further development of local organizations, and expanding the scope of local organizations to design, plan and monitor the project. In Bojiwan village, for example, a water bird breeding area was constructed and a committee established to manage the project with labour provided free by farmers. The CNNR oversaw the project and helped the villagers hire specialists to ensure overall quality control. In Zhangjiagou, based on the CTF management committee, a subcommittee was established to address the problem of soil erosion around the village. In other villages committees have been established to oversee tree-planting activities, whilst in others similar committees have been established for fishery control.

Adoption of the participatory process

The sequences of participation

Local participation is a step-by-step, logical process. At the beginning of the project, when candidates were selected, the CNNR used rapid rural appraisal (RRA) procedures. Project staff visited villages, interviewed poor farmers, and asked farmers to suggest candidates, with the CNNR deciding who could receive TUP grants. Later in the project cycle, however, the CNNR set up criteria for TUP recipients and gave farmers the responsibility of selecting TUP recipients by themselves. This transfer of power from the reserve to farmers has had the following effects:

- farmer participation has increased;
- farmers have accepted the results of the selection process, since they themselves undertook the selection;
- input from the reserve has gradually decreased during project implementation (in areas such as funding, personnel, and time);
- a level of mutual trust has developed between the reserve and the local community;
- local farmers' knowledge of each other's economic status has led to greater fairness in the selection of candidates.

Consequently, TUP coordinators and CTF leaders (both elected by farmers) and farmer development project coordinators (chosen by the reserve) currently play an important role in project initiation, monitoring, and management for both TUP and CTF projects. Farmers' participation has been of profound significance for the TUP and the CTF. The operation of the CTF depends on the local community.

Information sharing

From the outset the importance of information provision to villagers was recognized. The value of information dissemination was to give villagers an understanding of the project, and to facilitate their participation. In Cao Hai, project staff interviewed villagers in various ways, either as families, in small groups, or through village meetings. It was believed that this would reassure

BOX 6.2 THE COMMUNITY TRUST FUND IN OPERATION: YANG GUANSHAN

The first CTF group was established in Yang Guanshan in June 1995. Yang Guanshan is located downstream from Cao Hai, and is relatively undeveloped. There are 52 households in this natural village, half of them Hui and half Han. On the day that the CNNR came to the village to facilitate the establishment of the CTF, the villagers appeared enthusiastic, and seriously considered the selection of a coordinator. With regard to decision-making by the CTF committee members, villagers recognized that it was important they make the right decision. The CTF management committee was selected through a village meeting in a process seen as open, fair and transparent. After eight committee members of Yang Guanshan CTF had been selected, and regulations for managing the fund established, villagers submitted their application to the CNNR. In September 1996, based on a survey of CNNR staff, the Yan Guanshan natural village CTF was approved. After several years of operation the Yan Guanshan CTF is operating well, and eight committee members have assignments in the CTF management. They operate two account books, recorded by different people. Through a decision-making process involving all villagers in Yang Guanshan, a primary school and an electricity scheme have been planned. These collective activities have benefited all villagers.

villagers, reducing any misgivings that they might have had. This was particularly the case in villages where the CTF was being initiated for the first time, where villagers didn't believe that the right of decision-making would be transferred.

Financial and fund operations

Funding for the CNNR programme was allocated through the CTF and was derived from three sources: TUP groups, the ICF and the Chinese government. TUP groups received training for their project and a possible business start-up. After they had completed their business plans, they received the first $50. Three months later, after ensuring the successful progress of the group, the TUP gave the group their second $50. The TUP group had agreed in advance to donate $25 of this second payment to the CTF. For every successful TUP group, ICF donates $100, and the Chinese government $33. By the end of 2001, Cao Hai had 500 TUP groups with a 99 per cent success rate. By 2001, the total amount of money provided for CTFs totalled $79,000 (647,800 yuan).

Much of the fund is an external grant. When the project is finished, the villagers own their own fund. It is, therefore, very important that the villagers be allowed to manage the fund independently. Although there is a perception among villagers that interest rates are higher than those of a bank, the advantage of the CTF is that the interest belongs to the villagers. The CTF is expanding the fund by means of capital investments from villagers; the highest capital investment is 100 yuan per household.

Project monitoring and evaluation

Within the project, the CTF checks, monitors and evaluates progress against the following criteria:

- Is the fund proceeding well?
- Is the loan repaid on time?
- Are the accounts correct?
- Does the committee hold its meetings on schedule?
- Is participation of members at an acceptable level?
- Do regulations require amendment?

Most importantly, monitoring and evaluation is conducted by the villagers themselves. Because the fund is owned by all the villagers in a CTF group, all activities pertaining to the loan tend to be carried out under fair, open and transparent conditions. Villagers maintain continuous supervision of the loan. Some loans have been secured by committee members acting as guarantors, and others secured against the value of family assets. If an individual has access to neither of these, the supervisor will monitor the household. If a household looks like defaulting, the supervisor will visit to urge the return of the loan, imposing a small fine on each visit. The success rate is high, and through this recycling the fund grows. For example, in Bojiwan village, the total amount of the fund increased from 19,650 yuan in January 1998 to 33,000 yuan in July 2000. When the fund operates well, it plays an important role in the alleviation of poverty in the local community.

Project maintenance

In the long run, as the skill and capacity of villagers improves and the process of capacity building is strengthened, the mechanism of the project's operation changes. As villagers assume control of funding, the project officers will withdraw from the project and the role of the government will change from that of poverty alleviation to the provision of social services. In Cao Hai, villagers have diversified their economic base and their socio-economic requirements. Consequently, in the future the market should take the burden of financial support, with skills development and technical support for the government possibly operating through a user-pays mechanism.

Conclusions and recommendations

Through the implementation of the CTF in Cao Hai the participation of local villagers has been greatly enhanced. They in turn have recognized the importance of local organization. Villagers have become accustomed to designing, implementing, monitoring and evaluating their project. For example, by participating in the TUP and the CTF as implemented in Bojiwan village, villagers recognized that their organizational capacity and skills had improved. They presented a new proposal for establishing the water bird breeding area for their village, which they thought might benefit ecotourism and environmental protection. This form of enfranchisement can lead to wider skills and confidence building, from an initial specialized base of environmental protection. In the process of project implementation, skills in democracy, delegation and management have been gained, since each activity has a committee to manage and guide it through the

village meeting stages. Additionally, there is evidence that lifestyles have been enriched through better management of household budgets.

The project demonstrates that:

- nature reserve management can successfully shift its focus and role from environment protection or control to democratic environmental management;
- nature reserve management, normally entrenched in scientific prescriptions, can successfully implement alternative approaches to conservation, even when options remain unclear, against a backdrop of conflict. Through advice from more experienced agencies, and contributions from project partners, a strategy can be formulated.

The strategy described above focused on community-based conservation and development, giving full consideration to the needs of a poor population living on small tracts of land, with potential for conflict between conservation and their own development arising from their ownership of farming land within the nature reserve. The fact that villagers can be polarized as either protectors or beneficiaries need not deter sustainable conservation, achieved with the participation of those affected.

Recommendations

The are a number of lessons from this project for use elsewhere. The success of the project could be publicized more widely in China, particularly in rural areas where natural environments and ecosystems rich in biodiversity are in conflict with the perceived needs of the local population. Government officers should be given soft skills training for community communication and management. Strict training in participatory approaches to assist in attitude change is extremely important for project implementation staff and personnel; they must trust and believe in local farmers. External funding and technical support are very important in project initiation and operation, and should be considered in future projects. Partnership among agencies – in conservation and development activity – is related to many disciplines and agencies. Good cooperation and communication assists implementation, enabling the project to run smoothly. Finally, with regard to human resources, during the early phase of a project the experience of Cao Hai underlines the importance of hiring experienced staff from outside to train reserve staff and local people.

Village-based Participatory Forest Resources Management in Qu County, Sichuan Province

Located in Lishu administrative village, Qu County, the Cooperative Six village has been supported by the Ford Foundation's social forestry project since 1994. With a population of 161 in 43 households, the main sources of income are animal husbandry, agriculture (rice, corn, and potatoes), and migrant labour in nearby cities. In September 1982, the cooperative divided forest land between

Table 6.2 *Types of participation*

	Characteristics	*Objectives*
Notification	• To disseminate project information to the local community • Only one way of delivering information	To inform the community of the project's existence
Expression	• Farmers were invited to specify their needs, and to give their opinions on forest resources • Farmers were unaware of the project objectives	To help outsiders understand the local situation
Attendance	• Farmers were asked to hold meetings, join discussions, and to work in the project • The local community relied on outside resources, notably funding and technology	Project implementation
Co-decision making	• Project staff and local people worked together to: – identify the needs of the local people – discuss and propose project activities – arrange the implementation plan – formulate project regulations – share responsibility for decision-making	To create a feeling of project ownership among farmers through satisfying their needs
Self-management	• Farmers devise their own management regulations • Farmers adjust the regulations according to needs and circumstances • Farmers share project benefits and organize management responsibilities in village meetings • Farmers are able to seek external support from the government	To promote the management ability of local farmers

different households. However, a continued rise in the level of illegal logging led, in 1992, to the cooperative bringing forest land back under the control of the collective, and a forest warden was hired to patrol the 67ha of collective forest.

Main aspects of participation

Management objectives

The focus of the project is the effective management of existing forest resources by harnessing the skills and interest of the local community. The project is attempting to improve community self-management, and to increase income generated by farmers from the forest to reduce the conflict between protection and utilization of forest land, and to apply lessons learned in order to extend the scope of the project to other areas of the county. Table 6.2 shows how the degree

and type of participation varied according to the stage of the project and also illustrates its main aims.

Participation in the project cycle

Project identification

In the early stages of the project there was great interest from farmers in taking advantage of any funding available, regardless of the project objective. There was, however, a degree of disappointment at the discovery that the project would not necessarily provide tangible assets in the form of new infrastructure or trees, but merely encourage farmers to organize themselves for the management of existing forest resources. Discussion with project staff persuaded farmers of the benefits that could be obtained without undertaking a wide-scale afforestation programme. In planning, project staff approached farmers and posed a number of questions, which were discussed together at a village meeting. The outcome of this meeting provided a written set of regulations and division of responsibilities for the entire village.

Project planning

This plan asked the farmers to:

- discuss and decide which forest should be protected;
- to work out how to protect the forest;
- decide who would be responsible;
- decide what each household should contribute;
- assess what benefits could be obtained from the forest in the coming years, and how to share them among different families.

In its implementation this project is different from others, in that it is not driven by the government but by the villagers themselves, who work to an agreed set of regulations. The project merely lends encouragement and support to this process.

The project has been in operation for three years, and most of the project staff have now left the site, except to carry out periodic monitoring. The community is now dealing with the ongoing management of forestry resources independently, and has established mechanisms for management and for responding to changing external conditions.

One of the most significant impacts of the project has been the changing attitude of farmers towards participatory processes. Prior to the introduction of the project, the warden of the collective forest was accountable to the local government, without much input from the local community. Villagers witnessing illegal logging tended to ignore and dismiss the activity as none of their business. Now, the attitude among villagers is one of ownership, with a more proactive attitude leading to the reporting of illegal activity to forest wardens or forest management committee members. Furthermore, the motivation of farmers has

shifted; where once farmers were unwilling to be involved without payment, now they are prepared to be involved and sit on the management committee on the basis of what they perceive to be the long-term benefits of forest management. A recent example showed two members competing to join the management committee: for the first time, one of the contenders was female. Another candidate was even selected by the township government as an extension worker because of the wide experience he had gained in forest management.

Government officers observed that, once presented with the knowledge that ultimately they would be able to harvest their own forest, the local community could actually control and manage the forest well. This helps greatly to reduce the burden on the local government, in stark contrast to the situation prior to the project, when the government had little faith in the community, spending large sums in order to preserve the forest from the village saw.

The success of this project has led the local government to apply lessons from it to a national project – the Natural Forest Protection project – placing new emphasis on farmers' needs and interests.

The participatory process

In 1999, the provincial and county project team undertook a community survey to collect baseline data for the project. The principal aim was to use participatory methods to establish the economic situation of the local community, gather data on the geography and topography of the area, analyse the current situation in forest management, and understand the hopes and aspirations of the local community. In interviewing key groups of people, including women, the elderly and the poor, the survey also sought to identify problems and opportunities, with a particular focus on forestry resources.

Upon completion of the survey, project staff collated the results and held a village meeting to disseminate the findings to the whole village, inviting comment from village cadres, villagers, officials from the county forestry bureau and the head of the township government.

Through discussion, a number of problems in forest management were identified:

- Current forest management and protection regulations were imperfect. For example, rules were applicable only to villagers, not to forest wardens.
- The implementation of forest management regulations was not carried out effectively. Only the village head took responsibility for supervision; other community members were never involved.
- There were no clear guidelines or regulations on how to make use of the profits from thinning; villagers were concerned at the village head taking the money.
- The organizational structure for forest management left the village leader in charge and making decisions in isolation.
- Some forest guards were not serious about their work, and trees were often stolen.
- There were conflicts between protection and other activities, such as goat raising and firewood collection.

- There was inadequate knowledge to fully utilize non-timber forest products.
- There was no technology or policy support for forest husbandry.
- There was a lack of funds for forestry development.

Solutions

After discussing and reaching an agreement on the main problems of the collective forest areas, the villagers, village cadres and project staff together worked out the following measures to deal with the problems:

- improve village regulations; clarify the different responsibilities, rights and duties of cadres, forest guards and villagers;
- re-elect forest guards;
- keep certain areas solely for firewood and grazing;
- plant cash trees, such as fruit trees;
- enhance the organization and system of forest management; change the situation in which only the village leader makes decisions;
- try to obtain technical guidance on forest management, such as thinning, tending, and cash tree information;
- raise funds from different sources for developing the forest.

Establishing a participatory, collective, forest management team and reselecting the forest warden

Responding to the outcome of this discussion, project staff and the township government lent their support to a meeting of household heads at which a new management committee and forest wardens were elected.[4] The process was notable for the co-option onto the committee of a female representative where before there had been none, and because it took place as a result of the demands of villagers. Farmers who had long complained about top-down decision-making argued for more involvement, and villagers wanted to use the committee to take part in forest management, hoping that through the process of protecting the collective forest they would benefit economically. It was also felt that in the past there had been too many limitations on the use of the forest by farmers.

Establishing and implementing the community forest management plan

The first task of the community forest resources management team was working with villagers in a participatory manner to devise a scheme for forest resource management. The key elements of the scheme were to plan specifically both land use in Cooperative Six and the distribution of profits obtained from the forest.

Thinning of pine forests In November 1999 the forest resources management team of Cooperative Six proposed the thinning of a substantial tract of pine forest, a proposal ratified by the forest bureau. The forest management team organized the thinning process, but the details were only decided after a village group discussion.[5]

Once the level of profit was established, the accounts were made available to the community in the form of written documents, the first time that accounts had been made available to villagers. While villagers welcomed this initiative, a disagreement occurred over the distribution of profits. According to the agreed regulations, half of the profit was used in salaries for forest wardens. The remaining money was not distributed to villagers directly, as stipulated in the original regulations, but instead used to pay salaries to villagers who maintained community irrigation channels. Villagers not involved in aqueduct maintenance received nothing.

The role of the management team can also be seen in its response to changing demands for grazing land. In accordance with the management scheme, areas from Luojiagou to Shizibao on both sides of the Xiaogou reservoir were opened to grazing and collection of firewood. In 2001 an increase in the number of animals placed great stress on forest protection and tree growth, causing upset among villagers. The management team held a meeting to discuss this and adjusted the grazing areas accordingly.

In June 2001, without the participation of project staff, and in line with the management regulations of Cooperative Six, elections were held for new members of the management team. Using the same methods and procedures that had been used in the previous community meeting, the head of the cooperative and former team leader relinquished his position, since it was felt that he had neglected many of his tasks. Though regarded as responsible at the beginning of his leadership, with the passage of time it was felt that he rarely organized the supervision of forest wardens, seldom called community meetings and did little to solve villagers' difficulties. Under the stewardship of a new village leader, the forest management team submitted another application to the county forestry bureau, this time for the trimming and clearing of shrubbery and for the harvesting of a section of forest. The investigation and planning team sent by the county forestry bureau then designed a plan for the harvest to be implemented by villagers. During the implementation of the plan, the new management team fulfilled its promise to open the accounts, and distributed 20 yuan to all the villagers. This was the first time that villagers had seen a tangible reward for their community work. The significance of leadership in community-based projects was underlined by the change that accompanied the installation of the new leader and new management committee. In a move welcomed by villagers, regular meetings were held, and villagers were able to contribute suggestions and take part in discussions.

Stakeholder analysis

Main stakeholders

The key stakeholders and their activities in Cooperative Six, Lishu village, are summarized in Table 6.3:

Table 6.3 *Key stakeholders*

Key stakeholders	*Activities and roles of each stakeholder*				
	Baseline survey	*Problem identification*	*Establishment of a community organization*	*Plan-making*	*Plan implementation*
Farmers	Providing information	Attending meetings and offering suggestions; specifying requirements	Attending meetings; expressing opinions; electing candidates	Making proposals and discussing these in meetings	Actively involved in plan implementation
The forest management group				Conducting community meetings outlining project benefits; discussing planning process with farmers	Implementing plans; considering problems raised by farmers' groups; addressing these problems
Cooperative leader	Providing and disseminating information; discussing project with farmers	Assisting in the organization and holding of community meetings	Facilitating meetings and organizing elections for candidates	Assisting in meetings to discuss the planning process.	Participating in project implementation
Village cadres	Providing and disseminating information;	Assisting in the conducting of meetings	Organizing elections for candidates	Assisting in the conducting of meetings	Assisting plan implementation
Ford Foundation	Providing funds and support for the county office, and introducing PRA methods				

Table 6.4 *Secondary stakeholders*

Secondary stakeholders	*Activities and roles of each stakeholder*				
	Baseline survey	*Problem identification*	*Establishment of a community organization*	*Plan-making*	*Plan implementation*
County project office	Conducting evaluation; participatory management; establishing a committee for feedback	Conducting meetings; participatory management	Conducting meetings; participatory management; establishing the organization through democratic procedures	Assisting in the development of the plan	Providing technological assistance
County forestry bureau	Assisting in the organization of the survey	Aiding problem identification	Assisting in the organization of community management	Conducting community meetings; discussing planning with different groups	Devising policies and providiing technical services
Township government leader	Overseeing the survey	Assisting in the definition of problems	Overseeing the setting up of the management system	Advising on plan design	Overseeing implementation
Provincial office of community forest project	Providing support where necessary	Assisting in problem definition	Advising on the establishment of the organization	Providing support for devising of plan	Advising on plan implementation

Table 6.5 *The rights and responsibilities of stakeholders*

Stakeholders	*Rights*	*Responsibilities*
Farmers	Participate in decision-making and benefit from forest.	Observe the regulations for community forest management and protection; offer suggestions for community forestry development
Community forest management group	Assist villagers participating in forestry management	Adhere to the participatory democratic consultation system; carry out management regulations; liaise with project institutions; solve problems concerning forest management
Cooperative leader	Participate in decision-making and benefit from the forest; supervise the management group and forest guards	Observe management regulations and assist the work of the management team
Village cadres	Participate in decision-making and benefit from the forest; supervise the management team and forest wardens	Assist community work
Ford Foundation	Try to introduce participatory methods	Provide funding for communities (at the provincial and county level)
County project office	Benefit from the successes of the project, and disseminate information on it	Provide communities with guidance and consultation at different stages
County forestry bureau	Learn lessons from the project for the improvement of forestry management	Provide communities with labour force, information, policies and materials (saplings)
Township government leader	Support the project and disseminate its experiences	Provide communities with polices
Provincial project office	Support the project and advertise its benefits provincially and nationally	Provide the county office and communities with labour force and information

Factors affecting PRA practice

Political environment

The success of a participatory work pattern and the establishment of a forestry resource management team were largely due to a positive political environment. The law on self-regulation of village communities states that villagers have the right to set up special committees or organizations in a community and, as a result, the establishment of the community forestry management team in Cooperative Six was aided by the provincial, county and national governments.

External support

Villagers had become conditioned to the methods and processes of top-down instruction, with little or no knowledge of participatory methods. In such a situation external support in terms of technology, information (especially on participatory methods), and funds is essential. In contrast to other community projects in Sichuan, Cooperative Six was supplied, not with funds, but with policy guidance, information, technology and materials. The result was that the enthusiasm of local people for the project was much higher than elsewhere, its success also demonstrating the importance of experienced project workers playing a crucial part in community activities. Developments in Cooperative Six taught the wider community a lesson: although external support was very significant, the key lay in the development of community potential, with villagers mastering ideas and methods of operating, creating the right environment for a participatory pattern in community work rather than wasting money doing something less effective, or letting project workers do it instead.

Benefits to villagers

In forestry management, in recent years, villagers have paid more attention to their own economic benefit than to the ownership or exploitation of the forest. Providing villagers with motivation for participation and improving their economic status encouraged them to participate more fully. Without this incentive they would not have been interested in the application of participatory methods.

Unequal status

The managerial involvement of the poorest farmers was lower than other groups. With the advent of participatory management they were able to take part in gathering firewood. Yet, a lack of money for labour meant that they would get less wood than others, and without cows and livestock they had no way to make use of pastoral resources. They also took part in community meetings less frequently than their wealthier peers, often because they had to cope with the burden of more vulnerable family members who were seriously ill or handicapped. These poorer groups were often afforded little assistance by other members of the community. The issue of mass involvement, and of how to protect the weak and actively promote equal participation of different groups, is a problem still requiring attention.

Personal ability

The project established the value of good leadership. Capable villagers who became figureheads for participatory management exerted a positive effect on other farmers. The newly elected leader of Cooperative Six is a good example of the beneficial effects of personal ability. Factors pertaining to personal ability, such as organizational and problem-solving skills, have an influence over the participation of the villagers in general.

The institutionalization of PRA

Human resources

After three years of practising participatory forest management, members of the forestry resources management team have recognized the benefits of this form of management, and believe that their organizational ability has been enhanced, as they gauge village opinion and solve problems based on their information and ideas. Human resources have been developed through cooperation with project staff. Members of Cooperative Six have improved their way of thinking and working through direct, face-to-face communication with project staff.

There is, however, no structure in place for training and skills development for participation. It occurs on the job when project staff and villagers cooperate with one another, through special training classes, and by organizing field investigation. At present in Sichuan, people involved in participatory management in rural areas are working in schools, research departments and forestry departments. In the main they sit at provincial and prefecture level and are trained through various means to take part in participatory management. Some go abroad to study for degrees in this field, some take short-term training in China, and some participate in project management. Having accumulated enough experience through the management programmes in which they have participated, and made significant contributions to the development of community participatory management, they are now qualified to train others. However, a management mechanism cannot be established simply on the basis of the current pool of specialists. This is because officials at provincial, prefecture and district levels know little about participatory management, let alone about applying these management principles to daily work. It will thus be necessary to give training to officials at all levels whilst simultaneously strengthening training for the development of community human resources. For the training of officials, a variety of methods can be employed, such as exchange of ideas, on the job training, symposia, short-term field investigations, and participation in suitable projects.

Attitude and management culture

The project has shown the need to recognize the rich experience and creative ability of villagers, and to transfer enough power for them to play a decisive role in participatory management. After Cooperative Six adopted a participatory management approach, decisions were no longer made by the village leader in isolation, and both the leader and villagers changed their attitudes significantly. People agreed that community meetings were necessary for issues concerning public profit and public forest management, and if there was any attempt to take decisions without consultation, the villagers would simply elect someone else. Their management culture was therefore created by giving elective power to villagers. The transfer of power is thus a key concern in the development of a participatory management culture.

Capital

At present, the main source of capital for Cooperative Six is from phased forest

cutting income. Capital management and investment are transparent; after each harvest, accounts are publicized for the scrutiny and approval of villagers.

Because there is no capital investment from outside in the participatory management project, members of the Cooperative Six management team try to obtain a regular supply of money from the forestry industry, as a basis for investment. They do this by measures such as taking good care of the forest resources, applying for permission to increase profit levels, planting trees with a commercial value, and developing forest by-products. The management team fulfils its promise of open accounting and is trusted and supported by villagers. Villagers enthusiastically take part in the participatory management of the local forest, proving that open and transparent expenditure of money is a key dimension of community involvement.

Organization

The structure of management overseeing forestry resources in Qu County has matured as local government departments have begun regular management meetings and introduced operational systems for forestry production. Tiers of government management run from the county level to the governments of larger villages and towns, to smaller villages and cooperatives. Business organization runs from the county forestry bureau directly to state-owned forestry plants, then to forestry stations in the villages and towns. The supervisory organizations at county level are the County Greening Committee, the County Forest-protecting and Anti-fire Headquarters, the County Natural Forestry Resources Protection Project, the Project Guidance for Returning Land from Farming to Forestry, and the County Forestry Protection Project.

Management at county and village level is still top-down and characterized by targeting or the distribution of quotas to foresters in forestry development. This form of targeting and giving out quotas is sometimes not applicable to local villages, and thus invites criticism. In comparison, Cooperative Six in Lishu village now carries out a participatory management plan and has improved its communication with the county departments concerned. In taking this route, the county government will be more realistic in the forestry targets that it sets. Meanwhile, the village community is also calling for applicable, relevant forestry targets from county departments. A further benefit of participatory community management thus lies in enhanced levels of communication with concerned county government departments.

Dissemination

At present, most leaders in agricultural departments in Sichuan still know little about the ideas and application of participatory management and understand little of its potential effects. Certainly as a management mechanism it is quite alien. It is thus necessary to summarize experience from other successful cases, and to disseminate these examples to decision-makers. Publicizing community management will also underline the importance of participatory management for the sound management of natural resources.

Local Initiative Participatory Forest Management in Da Maha Village, Gen Ma County, Yunnan

Operating Context of Forestry Development in Yunnan

In Yunnan, forests play an important role in the rural economy and have the potential to enhance the environment, its rich biodiversity, and the livelihoods of marginalized people (impoverished groups, women and minorities). In particular, Yunnan's forests provide the following benefits:

- *Livelihood services*. There are a total of 2 million growers who still practise different types of swidden agriculture for subsistence and for income generation. Forests provide rural energy and construction, fodder and compost, and there are thousands of plant species traditionally collected by indigenous people for their own consumption, as well as for marketing.
- *Welfare services*. These include scenic and recreational services, since most nature reserves can service tourism development; and cultural and religious dimensions, since sacred trees, forests and mountains are an important feature of indigenous minority cultures throughout Yunnan.
- *Environmental factors*, such as hydrological storage and the release of water.

The poverty context: forest development and minority peoples

Within China, the interdependence between minority peoples and forested areas is being more widely recognized, as is the correlation between ethnic diversity and biodiversity, the importance of linguistic ecologies, and the place of indigenous knowledge in development practice.

Ethnic minorities, particularly those who have lived in the uplands of Yunnan for many generations and live in highly autonomous subsistence systems, are being economically and ethnically marginalized in the transition to the socialist market economy, and by globalization. This is owing in part to the incompatibility of vernacular institutions, and to difficulties in adapting to external institutional change. Some factors, including government policy, market stimuli and development interventions, have already dramatically affected minority societies and influenced the process of change.

The indigenous people of Yunnan have lived in harmony with their environment for many generations. They have developed a range of methods for managing natural resources based on their own distinctive perceptions and sophisticated local knowledge. Many mountains, landscapes and sites are regarded as sacred by different ethnic groups.[6] A greater understanding of these people's systems could aid the formulation and implementation of government policies and the establishment of new social arrangements for sustainable development.

Gender context

Under conditions of social equilibrium, a community defines roles separated by gender, and roles that are shared. The pattern of roles generally forms a

sustainable livelihood strategy on the basis of the resource factors of the local area. With major external changes, however, the equilibrium in gender roles is broken and can become dysfunctional. Often this dysfunction reduces the ability of women to continue to play fully productive and safe childbearing roles in society. For instance, a trend commonly observed in China is an increasing feminization of agriculture. In fragile environments where water, fodder, fuel, and arable land are under threat, it is women who suffer more than men from this degradation. More hours are spent collecting water and firewood, or attending to fields that produce less and less. When food is insufficient, it is usually the adult females who reduce their nutritional intake in favour of other family members. As a result of the extra work required to meet basic needs and a reduced and inadequate diet, women's health tends to suffer.

Rural and minority women in Yunnan have developed a close and direct relationship with the forest not only for gathering forest products, but also in terms of vernacular forest management and tree planting. Firewood, pine needles (for livestock bedding), mushrooms, herbs, grass (for weaving), and bamboo are all collected from the forest. Women are very concerned about environmental degradation, the lack of firewood, the lack of grazing, the lack of forest cover, and the loss of water – all of which particularly affect them. They provide the majority of the labour force for planting, and are involved in vernacular forest management.

Profile of Gen Ma County

This case study was conducted in Da Maha village, Meng Sha Town, Gen Ma County. Within Gen Ma County, Da Maha is one of the ten natural villages coordinated by the Man Zhen VC. Most of the villagers are Dai people; 57 of the 66 households are Dai, and the remaining households are Han. Cash income mainly comes from tea production, providing about 100 yuan per capita per year, and about 40 per cent of the total income. Some income comes from selling rice, wheat and corn, which is about 15 per cent of the total income, and about 15 per cent from selling pigs. Some government projects have been implemented in the village, such as a tea production project in 1990–1 and a sugar cane project in 1995 and 2001. The economic position of Da Maha is in the middle tier among the ten natural villages coordinated by the Man Zhen VC.

Table 6.6 *Changing characteristics of Da Maha village*

Year	*Number of households*	*Population*	*Labour*	*Labour force*	*Farming land (mu)*	*Per capita (mu)*
1982	42	243	112	90	501	2.06
1984	44	255	142	119	558 (paddy fields 254)	2.19
1997	55	308	153	124	562	1.82
2001	66	356	167	132	566	1.59

Source: Da Maha statistics for 1982, 1984, 1997 and 2001.

The origins of participation

The history of community forest management in Da Maha

Prior to the establishment of the People's Republic of China, there were very few people living in the Da Maha area (only 16 households in 1949). A strong traditional belief in the sacredness of the forest made redundant any need for forest or resource management. Forests were controlled by the head of the Dai people (*Zhanglao*), and any villager wishing to cut down trees was required to bow before the forest in prayer. After 1949, all community forests eventually became managed by commune production teams. During the land reform period, cutting trees was forbidden. However, during the Cultural Revolution, more than 20 households moved into Da Maha from other villages. Due to the limited provision of buildings, they started to cut trees, and even sacred forests, to build houses. The traditional forest management system and beliefs were destroyed.

With the implementation of the household responsibility system in 1982, based on the number of members in each household, 1.2 mu of paddy field was distributed to each villager, and 3 mu of shifting cultivation land were allocated to each household. In 1983, the Two Mountains System policy was implemented, in which every household received an area of mountain (forest) freehold, but forests and water sources were still managed collectively. There remained a lack of effective management regulations and mechanisms. Meanwhile, the indigenous system of knowledge and beliefs was gradually disappearing, and the forests as a water source were seriously affected.

In 1989, Da Maha was devastated by a strong earthquake, and almost all the villagers' houses collapsed. Even though they received some subsidy in compensation from the government, many trees were cut to build houses. This was especially the case during the 1993–4 period. With the increasing price of timber and fuelwood, community forests were opened to the cutting of trees. Tree cutting became not only an individual but also a collective activity. More than one third of the community forests were cut. Villagers discovered that their water was reduced considerably with the decrease in community forests, and they could not get enough drinking water. If the situation had continued, they would no longer have had water. Therefore, most of the villagers thought they should manage their forest as before, and have skilled people take care of the forested areas.

The introduction of participatory community forest management

In 1995, in order to strengthen local government management, the township government enacted a number of new regulations governing forest management. Man Zhen village, natural villages, and the residents of Da Maha were encouraged to improve their resource management. Villagers were provided with access to and responsibility for the management of their collective forests. Meanwhile, due to a continual depletion of collective forests in Da Maha, villagers also expressed a desire to improve their forest management. Based on government regulations and traditional practices, the villagers started to select professional forest wardens to manage their community forests.

Table 6.7 *The history of forestry management in Da Maha*

Year	*Events*	*Results*
Before 1949	Strong traditional belief in sacred forests and less population	Rich forests
1949–68	Land reform, with community forests managed by the commune production team. Cutting trees forbidden	Rich forest
1968–80	Many trees were cut to build houses, particularly during the Cultural Revolution	Loss of forests
1982	The implementation of the household responsibility system	Loss of forests
1983	The Two Mountains System	Loss of forests
1993–4	Increasing prices for timber and fuelwood	All trees cut, even in community forests

In the selection process, the heads of the village nominated the candidates, who were then elected at a villagers' representative meeting, with an agreement that the forest warden would get the same payment as village leaders.[7] However, the elected forest warden had left the post a year later, because payment had yet to be made. In replacement, the village heads nominated three young Dai leaders[8] as forest wardens. Without a clear set of guidelines or task, they struggled in a scene that was to be repeated for several years, until 1999.

In 2000, Da Maha witnessed its first democratic elections for VCs and village leaders, placing new responsibilities and rights for managing local natural resources in the hands of VCs. A village leader was elected from outside the Dai majority,[9] a person who, it was believed, could source information from outside the village and also carry out internal business effectively. Villagers also recognized that without practical forest management regulations and appropriate institutional arrangements, they would never manage the community forest effectively. Based on the ideas of the villagers, and in order to strengthen community forest management, the VC set up some new village rules, quite different to those in other villages.

At the same time, a village meeting was held to select a new forest warden, ensuring that every household had at least one representative in attendance. During the meeting, all participants discussed the regulations, rights and responsibilities. They then divided into small groups to discuss the candidate for forest warden. Finally, a consensus was built amongst all participants on the next person to be selected. If the new forest warden did not perform well, he could be replaced, in accordance with the rules.

Table 6.8 provides a brief history of wardens, and the criteria by which they were selected, according to villager accounts. In Da Maha, participatory forest management is considered highly appropriate and relevant by most of the villagers. It could thus be classified as a form of decision-making participation, since the community identifies problems, and plays a key role in shaping solutions. The township and the community cooperate in an alliance to produce an improved and demand-responsive service delivery. The Da Maha community

Table 6.8 *The forest managers in Da Maha*

Year	*Person in charge*	*Selection*
Before 1949	The head of the sacred forest, elderly people	On the basis of Dai tradition and beliefs
1949–82	The youth leader and a group of village leaders	From Dai tradition Appointed by higher-level government
1983–95	Village leaders	Appointed by higher-level government
1995–2002	Wardens (four selected during the seven-year period)	Village leaders nominated, via a representative village meeting

Source: Group discussion with villagers, 2002.

initiated the participation process, and considered the needs of women and other vulnerable groups.

With the exception of the water source and the water forest area in the community forest, villagers are allowed to collect fuelwood from their forests. Every year they cut trees in one area, and the next year move to another, since every household has at least two or three areas of forest freeholdings. The forests grow very fast, with trees for fuel taking three years to mature. Meanwhile, villagers can also cut trees from their forest freeholdings to build houses without a quota restriction from government, which is different from other forested areas.

Participatory community forest management

The villagers defined the objectives of participation as follows:

- to develop their enthusiasm for sustainable forest management and utilization, especially for protecting water source forests;
- to build community capacity for self-governance, as well as community participation in forest management;
- to allow villagers to share benefits from forests directly, and to solve conflicts between the interests of conservation, utilization, and development;
- to increase the enthusiasm and willingness of villagers to be actively associated with forestry management; and
- to increase awareness by villagers of their duties and responsibilities, and allow them to gain benefits from the forest.

During different periods, the degree of villagers' participation in the project varied. At the beginning of the participation process, village leaders were mainly involved. Even though the rules for forest wardens were formulated and implemented, there was still a lack of strong support from most of the villagers. Consequently, forestry management was not efficient. During the democratic elections for VCs and village group leaders in Da Maha, new responsibilities and rights for managing local natural resources were placed in the hands of VCs. Subsequently, both the new village leaders and the villagers participated in forest management.

Community factors affecting participation

The Gen Ma case shows that historical precedent, village hierarchies, political environment and cultural beliefs are all very important for community participation. Gen Ma is a Dai village, and the Dai people have their own cultural beliefs such as the sacred status of trees, requiring protection of their forests. Even though their traditional beliefs were undermined during the Cultural Revolution, they are now returning. The relevant traditions of the Dai people are summarized below:

- Four out of five households are headed by women.
- Men carry out housework, such as taking care of children and cooking.
- Women control the supply of money, work in the fields, collect fuelwood, and work outside the village.
- Good standards of sanitation are maintained.
- Traditionally, respect is accorded to older people.
- Good social networks enable a collective approach to social organization.
- Community forests are managed collectively.
- There is a spiritual belief in the sacredness of trees.[10]

All these factors affect community participation in forest management.

People's behaviour and attitudes

Similarly, villagers have clear views about the capability of people, and these affect their behaviour and attitude, as well as their participation.

Table 6.9 *Village leaders' and villagers' views on 'capable people'*

	Village leaders' views	*Villagers' views*
'Capable' people are:	• Adaptable to change • Dare to be proactive • Keen to learn from experiences outside the village • Capable of developing economic and social networks • Knowledgeable about agricultural technology • Capable of working outside the community • Good at managing local affairs	• Hard-working • Resourceful • Capable of working outside the village • Experienced in gaining information from contacts outside the village • Self-sufficient/able to work alone • Surrounded by relatives (contacts) • Wealthy • Capable of earning more money • Well-educated • Well-connected socially
'Unsuitable' people are:	• Experienced mainly in selling fuelwood • Less educated • Cautious • Timid	• Substantial owners of paddy fields and free-holding forests • Helpful to others, but tend to miss opportunities for family advancement • Poorly organized farmers

Source: Group discussion with villagers, 2002.

Table 6.9 shows that both village leaders and villagers consider the capacity to communicate with outsiders and to work proactively, as important qualities. Additionally, most of the villagers think that limited access and lack of technology and information from outside are the main constraints on their development.

External agencies

Even though the participatory approach emphasizes the role of communities, without support and help from government at its different levels (particularly local government), as well as that of the external agencies, community participation would not be sustainable.

In the Da Maha case, the current institutional structures at the local level, especially the village level, promote community participation and the development of capacity at the local level. The role of local government in capacity building is very important, largely because the legal statutes and rights of the different community organizations are recognized by the relevant government agencies. If the communities' activities or ideas were not supported or recognized by the different levels of government, or not in accordance with the laws or regulations, these activities might not be continued. In Da Maha, villagers have their own way of managing and utilizing freeholding forest. The local government considers the needs of villagers and the actual situation in the area. They then allow the villagers to cut the trees in their freeholding forest, based on their actual needs, without adhering strictly to the formal quota.

A second element is that external agencies and outsiders who understand the principles and methods of participation, and who have experience of community development, are very important for local capacity building. There is a need for experienced outside facilitators to improve community development processes. People in Gen Ma welcomed the new experiences and perspectives of outside trainers. It also led them to want to visit new places, and to learn more from the experiences of others. Villagers who can communicate well with outsiders, and who travel outside the village to see new and different ways of managing resources, receive considerable respect in the community.

Finances

Although financial assistance can be critical, especially in the initial phase of a project, it should not be seen as a determining factor in success. Finance was critical in Cao Hai. In Gen Ma, however, money appears to have been a less important factor. Financial support was mobilized from different levels of government, but much of it was not directed at the problem, and in some cases money simply caused the government to duplicate old problems, rather than trying new approaches. The introduction of local village elections at Gen Ma helped to focus attention on how funds would be spent. With a clear vision at the village level of what needed to be done, this could then be communicated to higher levels of government, which were supportive of villagers' wishes.

Human resources

Community skills

Human resource development should be prioritized, and much of this can come from outsiders and outside sources of information. External information can improve the capacity for participatory development. In Gen Ma, outside information brought new perspectives to the problem, and allowed villagers to see things in a novel way.

Leadership

The capacity and personality of community leaders also appears to be important for the effectiveness of community organizations, as well as for forest management. In Da Maha, the village leader has strong managerial capabilities. He has skills to facilitate, organize and negotiate with village leaders, as well as with the villagers. These skills help him to organize community meetings, and to facilitate discussion. He has practical skills and knowledge of animal rearing, agricultural production and business operations. The villagers believe that he is the kind of person who can help them to achieve sustainable forest management, as well as to develop the village economy. Personality – including moral discipline and personal characteristics such as responsibility, initiative, willingness to contribute, and altruism – are features which help the leader build up trust among the villagers.

Decision-making and transparency

In Da Maha, it is strongly felt that commitment to genuine transparency necessitates that the project goes beyond just making information available to those who ask about it, and that it works aggressively to disseminate information about the project to all villagers, so that subsequently no one will feel 'left out' of the project.

Constraints on effective participation

The main constraints on participation can be summarized as follows:

- Although central government has stated that there should be a shift from central planning to a system characterized more by guidance and assistance, effectively local government policy is still a major controlling factor. This constitutes an important constraint on the institutionalization of community participation.
- Consequently, there is a lack of an institutional mechanism for applying participatory approaches in natural resource management, and particularly in policy making and implementation. Most participation takes place with experts who speak with one voice; it sometimes involves some farmers, but many of them might be rich farmers or village leaders.
- There remain differences in approach between technicians, economists, government officials and local people. The views of traditional foresters and

governmental officials focus mainly on technical or economic criteria, or, most recently, on environmental criteria. Yet forests are widely recognized by local people as providing subsistence needs for their livelihoods, and also for conserving the natural environment as a basis for sustainable economic development. In the main, existing institutions at local level are not yet ready for participatory, pro-poor approaches. Most leaders still lack the capacity to build on vernacular culture, 'intercultural' reciprocity and synergy. There is an absence of instrumental feedback in the policy-making and implementation process.

- There remains an inadequate degree of flexibility at provincial level to adapt state policy to the local context.

Conclusions and recommendations

From the Da Maha case, it appears that local communities are the most appropriate bodies for community forestry management and forest conflict management. Local community capacity, as well as the level of enforcement of rules and security of tenure, are critical issues in forestry management. Forest resources are more likely to be sustainably utilized if an effective institutional structure exists that gives rise to a meaningful authority system at the local level. National policy should focus on returning rights to local communities and promoting effective community-based forestry management. Community forestry or social forestry can only be achieved together with security of tenure.

Second, in order to achieve sustainable NRM, it is necessary to build local capacity. It is essential that villagers participate in decision-making, and that local participatory processes in NRM are institutionalized

Third, for local capacity building, the most important issues are to respect the diversity of ethnic culture, and to ensure the democratic election of VCs and village leaders, placing new responsibilities/rights for managing local natural resources in the hands of VCs.

Fourth, it is well known that successful development can only be achieved by a truly collaborative effort between local community groups, agencies, scientists and policy-makers. However, despite ongoing improvements in this area over recent years, it is clear that we still have a long way to go in achieving such collaboration – and effectively sharing perspectives, information and ideas.

Fifth, the volume of participatory research continues to expand. The resulting information overload causes researchers and practitioners alike to miss much useful material, which they have neither the means to identify nor the time to read.

A final problem area concerns the breadth of discipline and specific areas of expertise that are needed. The practice of involving people and building constructive partnerships requires not only specialist knowledge of a particular area (agriculture, biodiversity, etc), but also skills in a diverse range of areas, from information management through to conflict resolution. A lack of technical knowledge, no matter how good the facilitator, can often result in delays and blockages in achieving results.

Based on the above, the following recommendations can be made from the Da Maha case:

- Policy-makers need to be aware of the importance of local capacity building. They must develop institutional arrangements which are responsive to local conditions, and which are locally managed.
- Villagers must be fully aware of their rights, responsibilities and obligations during the village democratization process.
- Respect for existing indigenous knowledge, practices, technology and customary institutions is crucial for furthering the management of natural resources.
- It is important to ensure that effective and respected village leaders are selected.
- The work of social scientists and participatory practitioners must be facilitated, informing and improving practices for constructive societal change and ensuring that more research finds its way into practice.
- Facilitators need to be taught how to develop their capacity to work with communities and to have first-class technical knowledge of the particular sector in which they are working.
- In relation to information overload or information loss, it is important that lessons are documented for others to use.

Conclusions from the Case Studies

Key factors influencing participatory processes and outcomes

Lessons and experiences from the three case studies are summarized briefly, below. In each case, our main concerns are the lessons that can be learnt for disseminating participatory approaches.

The supporting role of external organizations

It is crucial to gain support from outside organizations in relation to financial, human resource, and information inputs. This was particularly crucial in the Da Maha case. Donors and technical agencies play a role different to that of government agencies, as facilitators in the process of project implementation. Given local agencies' lack of skills in using PRA methodology in the project, outside organizations have an important facilitating and teaching role.

Information inputs and training

At the beginning of a project, using approaches that will strengthen the capacity for participation of the local community in training and contributing information for sustainable NRM is very important. Most project staff do not understand PRA, and they have to contribute more energy and time to the project, as compared with traditional approaches. Most are technical staff, and have little knowledge of social sciences, either in China or more widely. Politically, project implementation is strongly based on the top-down process, and there is little appreciation of the skills and attitudes needed for working with local communities. Staff have not learnt PRA methodologies previously, and may not have any incentive to learn them if they cannot see immediate benefits from their use in practice.

The PRA approach – its application and localization

Local people and agencies are more familiar with local conditions, and local institutes are important for disseminating the PRA approach. Local institutes enable a strengthening of linkages with outside organizations and grass-roots groups using the PRA approach. In the Cao Hai case, for example, the main project staff are from the CNNR management (the local managerial agency), and their ability and capabilities improved considerably as the project developed. During project implementation, they learnt how to apply for new projects and set up linkages with donors and technical support agencies. During the third phase of the Cao Hai cooperative project, for example, CNNR officials successfully learnt important skills, such as holding PRA training, and writing project evaluations.

Capacity building in managerial agencies

Implementing the project utilizing PRA approaches to strengthen capacity building of the local community depends greatly on contributions from officials and researchers who have both PRA skills and project experience. In the Cao Hai case, before the project started, considerable time and financial capital were made available to improve staff skills, and to strengthen the capacity of Cao Hai nature reserve management. It took a long time to change the behaviour and attitudes of the staff and management of the nature reserve.

Significance for government agencies responsible for capacity building in local communities

Strengthening capacity building in the local community for participation in NRM, requires strong policy support from the government. It also requires the government to disseminate this approach in different areas. In the community-based approach to NRM in Guizhou, the impact on government agencies appears to have been significant. In the implementation of the Cao Hai project, the media played an important role in providing publicity, so that many people became familiar with the Cao Hai approach. Most important for capacity building, however, was that, observing the implementation of the Cao Hai community-based conservation project, the local government began to recognize that the PRA approach in biodiversity conservation was more effective and efficient. As a result, it will now be easier to disseminate this approach to other areas, through a genuine involvement by government agencies in the participatory process.

Additionally, in each of the case studies, we have seen that provincial governments have begun to realize that PRA approaches can result in more efficient project implementation. Following the implementation of the Cao Hai project, for example, the Guizhou government found that using PRA was efficient not only within the nature reserve, but also in rural areas in general. The government currently considers that PRA can also be of assistance more widely, in both NRM and poverty alleviation programmes and projects.

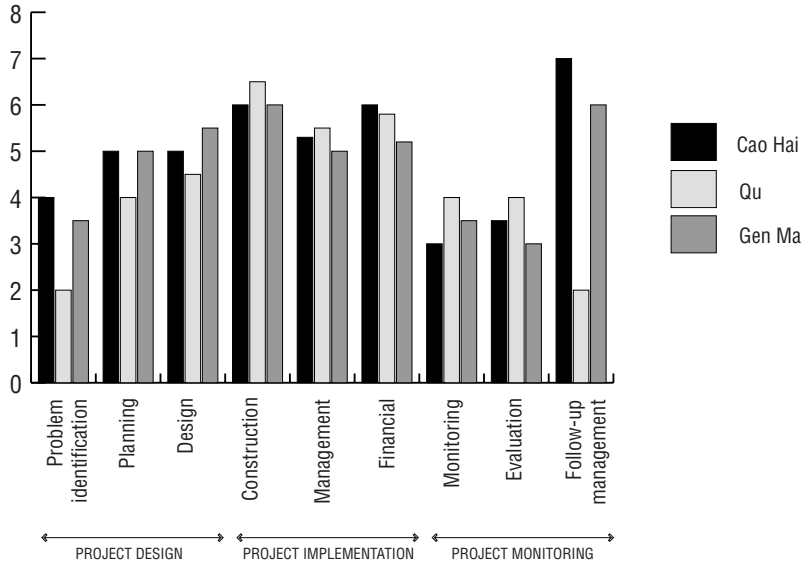


Figure 6.1 *Levels of community participation achieved during the project cycle*

Participation during the project cycle, in relation to the community

The main forms of community participation observed in the three case studies can be classified into seven types, from the weakest (notification participation) to the strongest (self-management) form of participation. The changing levels of participation are based on the ladder agreed in the research workshop, held in October 2002, in Beijing, prior to the final writing up of the case studies. These are:

- forced participation;
- notification participation;
- attendance participation;
- expression participation;
- discussion participation;
- decision-making participation;
- self-management participation.

Figure 6.1 compares these seven levels of community participation in the three case studies during their project cycles. The main stages of the project cycle are: problem identification, planning, design, construction, management, financial, monitoring, evaluation and follow-up management.

The analysis carried out using the agreed ladder of participation highlights a very similar pattern of participation being achieved by all three projects. It appears that, in each, community participation increased during the early stages (particularly during problem identification and planning) and assumed a decision-making form. However, during the monitoring and evaluation phase of the

project, community participation declined. This is not surprising, given the long Chinese history of hierarchical links between the rural community and provincial government. At later stages of the project, as follow-up procedures influenced management, the Cao Hai and Gen Ma cases achieved recognizable levels of self-management and decision-making participation. The Qu County case showed little participation during the follow-up management phase, due to the unique factors described earlier.

In general, we can conclude from the research that, during the project phases, variations in community participation were influenced largely by the following factors:

- an increasing understanding of community participation in the early phases;
- a determination to achieve sustainable improvements;
- reduction in costs and the need to meet donor conditions;
- increasing participation by core members of the community, particularly when they were required to attend meetings, express their views, and get involved in discussions;
- continuous building of support in the community, on the basis of a progressively successful implementation of activities; and
- project monitoring and evaluation undertaken largely by outside experts or agencies, with only limited community involvement.

Notes

1 Edited by John Taylor.
2 The reserve is populated by 13,200 rural people in 14 villages, and 20,000 urban inhabitants (Tang Guojun, 1990).
3 They lost productive land in the post-Maoist restoration of territory, and were self-sufficient in neither food nor income. In a vicious spiral of subsistence, they would run short of food in spring and then have few funds to buy seed and fertilizer for the new season.
4 There were six steps in this process: Step1: Recommend candidates for the forest management committee and forestry warden; Step 2: Voting; Step 3: Counting of votes; Step 4: Implement the vote, Step 5: Give clear responsibility to each member, Step 6: Each member to make a speech to let the villagers know his/her plan.
5 Items discussed included the quantity of total cutting, pay for the villagers involved in management, pruning of trees and the checking of accounts.
6 Examples of such sites are the Meili Snow Mountain (by the Tibetans in Deqing), the Jizuo Mountain (by the Bai people), the 'holly hills' (by the Dai people) and the Xilong Mountains (by the Kucong – or Black Lahu – people).
7 Approximately 40 yuan per year.
8 The leaders were named 'Huotou' – a traditional Dai term for leaders taking care of young people.
9 The ethnic Dai people account for 95 per cent of the local population.
10 Source: group discussion with villagers, 2002.

7

Building Government Capacity: The Collaborative Hengxian Integrated Approach to Rural Reconstruction

Zhang Lanying

This case study describes the experience of the Collaborative Hengxian Integrated Approach to Rural Reconstruction (CHINARR) project conducted in Hengxian County, Guangxi in 1994–2000.[1] The fundamental aim of the CHINARR project was to gain a better understanding of the dynamic relations between local government, service agencies and communities. This case study thus provides detailed experiences relevant for capacity building in community participation. The information which follows in this chapter provides a range of lessons on community participation by analysing key aspects of the project – in particular, the capacity building of government and village stakeholders, their roles and relationships, and the process of establishing and sustaining participatory processes.[2]

The roots of the Integrated Approach to Rural Reconstruction (IIRR) approach are anchored in the context of China. For 25 years, from 1924 to 1949, Dr Y C James Yen and his colleagues implemented a rural education[3] programme following a fourfold rural reconstruction approach in the provinces of Hebei, Hunan and Sichuan.[4] Between 1991 and 1993, the IIRR and the State Education Commission (SEDC) of China organized a three-year exchange. The programme aimed to develop this collaborative exchange of information and knowledge: the IIRR contributing to SEDC's Pilot Integrated Rural Education Programme and the IIRR learning from the Chinese experience to enhance its international training programme. The CHINARR project described in this chapter grew out of IIRR's collaboration with SEDC.

Project Design

Objectives

A primary issue in the development of capacity for sustainable rural development in China is the lack of effective strategies and mechanisms for integrated rural

education. This has led to a shortage of specialized personnel and lower-level workers in rural areas. To respond to this lack of capacity, in the first phase of the CHINARR the overall objective was to enhance the capacity of the education commission of Hengxian in Guangxi to implement an integrated rural education programme. This was to be brought about through a set of specific objectives to:

- promote health and sanitation, occupational health and safety, environmental education, extension methods, and participatory training techniques as an integral part of the rural education programme undertaken in schools;
- develop appropriate information, education and communication (IEC) materials on occupational health and safety, general health and environmental education which could be used for capacity building; and
- improve the knowledge and skills of teachers and other professionals in the areas of occupational health, general health, environmental education, extension methods and participatory training techniques.

During the second phase of the project, the overall goal and specific objectives were modified to respond to the needs articulated by local people and to adapt to a change in government structure. The goal of the CHINARR project was therefore revised in 1999 to strengthen awareness of environmental protection among residents of Hengxian – so that all sectors in the county would be encouraged to take part in action for environmental protection. This included leaders and decision-makers, management staff in township enterprises, residents of county and township (urban) areas, students at elementary/high schools and farmers in rural areas.

The capacity building of government officials and staff from service institutions formed a key component of the project. This served to enhance understanding of participatory approaches and institutionalize community participation in government projects and service provision.

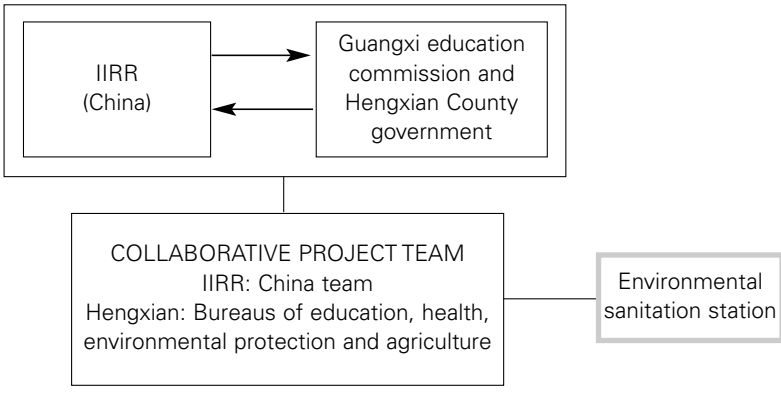


Figure 7.1 *Management of the CHINARR project*

Project strategies and design

To achieve these objectives the project strategy was focused on strengthening local government and building capacity within its local service delivery agents. Specifically the activities designed in this process involved:

- producing health kits and developing appropriate IEC materials on occupational health and safety/general health and environmental education;
- providing training to improve the knowledge and skills of teachers and other professionals in the areas of occupational health/general health, environmental education, extension methods and participatory training techniques; and
- integrating health and sanitation, occupational health and safety, environmental education, extension methods, and participatory training methods and techniques into rural education programmes.

The project design was formed around two tiers of action:

1 At the institutional level, activities aimed to develop the capacity of local government officials/leaders and staff of the different local bureaux and agencies to undertake programmes in education, agriculture, health and environment.
2 At the community level, action aimed to develop the capacities of different groups in the community (eg, farmers, health workers, students and residents). This was to be achieved through support from the first tier, encouraging them to take action towards ecologically sound livelihood activities. It was envisaged that the service institutions at the local level could reach more people and provide better services. The project design was summarized in a participatory evaluation workshop conducted in 2000 (see Figure 7.2).

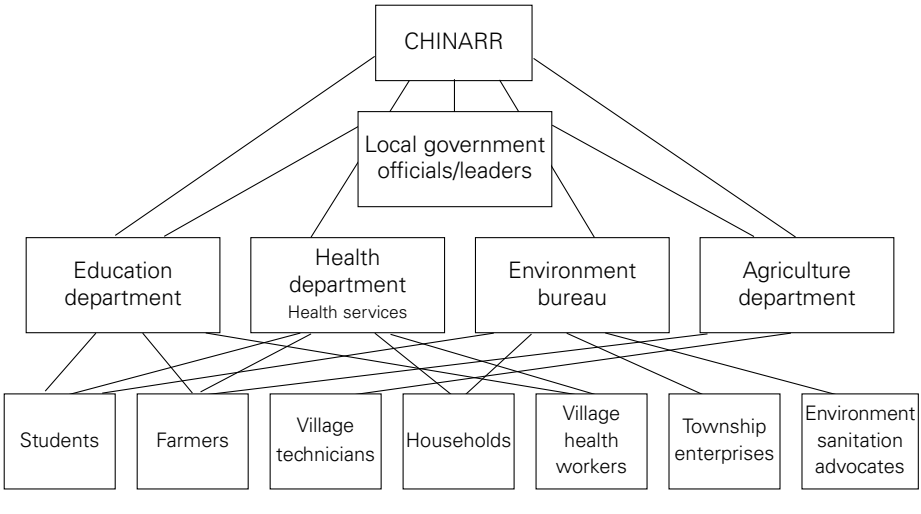


Figure 7.2 *Structure of the CHINARR project*

The proposal defined the roles of each of the key project partners identified:

- The vocational high school was given responsibility for the implementation of the project and provided counterpart funding;
- The education bureau of Hengxian County was to issue accreditation on the project and if necessary extend guidance on the project and provide counterpart funding;
- The education commission in Guangxi Province was to provide advice on the project; and
- The IIRR project was to provide technical support for training, develop and produce IEC materials and implement the project in the field. In addition, it was to raise and provide the major portion of project funds.

Primary project components

During Phase 1 (1994–7) the project first undertook a process of data collection and project design. The first major activity to occur in Hengxian was a participatory workshop to produce an occupational and public health kit. This involved needs assessment, planning and write-up workshops. Based on the kit produced, IEC materials were developed and tested through a process of skills development with teachers in Yunbiao vocational high school. Equipped with the knowledge and skills learned in the training, teachers from the schools were then able to work in the two pilot villages. The environmental education kit went through the same process in principle, but also included modifications suggested by the local counterparts.

During Phase 2 (1998–2000) greater emphasis was given to environmental education (EE), and the major project interventions included training of trainers and 'echo' training (as well as field operations extending the training output). The main aim was to develop an approach that would make EE relevant in different sectors, to promote changes in attitude and behaviour in relation to participation and to improve the social responsibility of individuals and agencies. To this end, the process of training trainers in EE was integrated into the education sector, training of trainers in integrated pest management (IPM) was carried out in the agriculture sector, and training of trainers in solid waste management (SWM) was integrated into the environmental protection sector.

Following these training courses, an action plan for echo training was formulated and conducted. The ideas emerging from local needs were further developed into field operations (eg, a lesson plan for integrating environmental education into various subjects, farmer field schools (FFS) and solid waste separation).

A sharing workshop promoted the consolidation of experiences through participatory monitoring and evaluation. This involved all stakeholders from both the institutional and community tiers of action, and provided an opportunity for all levels (national, provincial, county, township and village) to review and evaluate the project. The intention was to facilitate a process by which the project could be taken forward by the local stakeholders and replicated in other areas.

Familiarization and study visits for local government officials were organized during the project to disseminate the experiences developed in other countries.

Table 7.1 *Programme strategies and activities (1994–2000)*

Phases	*Strategies*	*Activities*
Phase 1 1994–7	Project development and proposal writing	• Data collection in October 1994
	Health kit production	• Needs assessment for health kit production • Study visit • Occupational safety/general health kit planning • Occupational safety/general health kit workshop
	Environmental kit production	• Needs assessment for environmental kit production • Environmental education kit planning • Environmental education kit workshop • Post-workshop activity at IIRR
	Training and IEC materials production	• Occupational health and safety/general health kit training and testing of IEC materials
Transition (1997)	Re-planning	• Consultation and reflection • Study visit
Phase 2 1998–2000	Participatory planning	• Planning
	Training	• Training of trainers (TOT) in EE • Technical support for EE integration in school • Follow-up on echo training • SWM training • Participating in national IPM training • TOT in IPM for rice • New field project development and fund raising
	Field operation and adaptation	• Year 2000 annual planning • Technical support for FFS organization and implementation • Solid waste pilot site preparation and implementation • Lesson plan competition for EE integration into school curriculum • Teaching module development • Preparation for project evaluation • Follow-up with FFS and lesson plan • Participatory evaluation workshop • Follow-up activities related to project evaluation
	Sharing and phase out	• Preparation • Sharing workshop • Expansion of solid waste project • Documentation of CHINARR project • Study programme

These visits were structured around the same thematic focus (eg, rural and environmental education, sustainable agriculture and ecologically sound interventions). The main strategies and activities conducted in each phase are presented in Table 7.1.

Key outputs

Since 1994, the project has used participatory workshops to collate and document results. Two sets of IEC materials have been produced and widely disseminated at local and national/international levels,[5] providing information to schools and township education stations, and targeting adult education teachers, school teachers, community health workers and extension workers.

The CHINARR project conducted TOT with 136 participants based on adult learning principles. The training included environmental health education, IPM and SWM. It was directed at health workers, extension staff and vocational school teachers. Echo training was also conducted for 375 schoolteachers, 1125 health workers and 150 farmers (through farmer field schools).

Based on training experiences and teaching experiments in schools, an EE curriculum was developed. The integration of EE into the school system was assisted by other techniques such as a competition for teachers to devise an appropriate lesson plan (300 schools in Hengxian participated). Solid waste separation is also now implemented in two districts, with plans to expand further into the county proper and at township levels.

All the activities were aimed at enhancing the capacity of target groups[6] to use participatory training and extension methods to best serve their constituents. The IIRR also reorientated county leaders (at the bureau, township, school and village levels) providing overseas exchange trips to develop a clearer understanding of the concept of community participation. This included a trip to the Philippines to visit institutions experimenting with the role of participation in sectors such as education, health and environmental protection.

Throughout the whole project cycle, from project planning through to implementation and then evaluation, the IIRR worked with groups from a number of government agencies (education, health, environmental protection and agriculture). As with teachers and extension workers, the process of capacity building sought to build their capacity for planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation in a participatory manner, to ensure that they serve the needs of their constituents.

At the end of the project, a participatory evaluation workshop and a workshop to share experiences were organized jointly by the local government and the IIRR. Representatives from the institutional tier (the FAO IPM office in Beijing, the Ministry of Agriculture and the provincial Departments for Education, Environmental Protection and Agriculture, along with leaders from county government) and the community tier (vocational school teachers, adult education teachers, extension workers, health workers and township and village leaders) all participated.

Lessons learned

A number of important lessons have been learned from this integrated approach to developing capacity. Those specifically relating to community participation include, for instance:

- It is essential to raise awareness amongst local staff and government officials of the value of participatory approaches. In raising awareness about participation, the process is as important as the end result. This is the major task of capacity building.
- A participatory approach is time-consuming. It will take time to demonstrate and convince people of its effectiveness and efficiency. Human development also takes time. Before local governments can be persuaded of the merits of entering into a participatory process, it is necessary to demonstrate the value of investing in human resources.
- The promotion of a participatory approach must be pursued throughout the life of the project – from planning, during implementation through to monitoring and evaluation. Clear and agreed objectives for staff training are a very important motivational tool for encouraging local staff to participate, as they are perceived as potential for their own self-development.
- Wider institutional reform in China is a prerequisite for a more participatory approach, and for promoting greater acceptance of the concept at local levels of government.
- Building community capacity in the process of planning and decision-making is as important as capacity building for the local government officials and staff.

In relation to project management, key lessons included:

- Project site selection is constrained by government priorities and government interests. Limited community participation can reduce the wider availability of information.
- In a top-down system, capacity building at an institutional level begins with attitudinal change arising from a broader (top-down) directive requiring that individuals seek solutions with the end-user/target audience. No longer are they passive recipients, but initiators, organized to take on responsibility. Participatory methods need to be introduced and encouraged, and then creatively adapted and integrated into their work. To ensure the application of enhanced knowledge and skills, and to reap the rewards of training, the right institutional arrangements must be in place, backed up by appropriate financial and technical support.
- Capacity building at community level begins with confidence building. Being able to communicate in public and articulate problems and issues is an important skill. The critical challenge then becomes creating a space for dialogue and communication.
- For field operation, a more detailed assessment of problems with different stakeholders identifying key issues is very important for mobilizing key stakeholder support.
- Prevailing government regulations, and the unwillingness of local institutions to accept change, act as barriers to the introduction of new subject matter, such as participation, which will be implemented over the longer term.

A key institutional lesson concerns the motivation of government staff. It is necessary to introduce performance-related measures such as career promotion to enhance the profile of participation in the administrative system.

The Operating Context of the Project

Institutional context of project implementation in Hengxian

One of the key factors giving rise to the selection of Hengxian County as the project site was the willingness of the provincial and county officials to collaborate with IIRR and their interest in engaging with and developing the participatory approach. The IIRR staff were also impressed by the political will of local leaders in Hengxian to bring benefits to the people of the county. As the deputy mayor at Hengxian, responsible for education in the county government at the time, put it, 'as long as we can do something for the poor, we will do it'. He acted on this commitment by organizing the local resources, both human and financial, to support the first phase of project implementation.

The project also received explicit support at the provincial level. The provincial leader responsible for the National Integrated Rural Education Programme designated a staff member to ensure coordination and communication between the IIRR and the county during Phase 1 – all to promote smooth project implementation. As a national undertaking, the implementation of the Integrated Rural Education Programme was mandated to the provincial Department for Education. The IIRR's aims were consistent with this mandate and gained full support from both provincial and county levels of government. The implementation strategy of having one vocational school linked to two villages was fully supported by the project team.

Despite the political will at the provincial level, a number of political and administrative blockages towards the participatory approach and the poverty focus arose and hampered project implementation. First, although the IIRR implementation framework was designed in such a way that the identified host – the Yunbiao vocational school – would work directly with the two identified communities, in practice it was unable to do so. The mandate to a vocational school from the Department for Education is to train a certain number of students, and this does not include going to the communities and serving them directly. Difficulties in the delivery process arose because the systems and procedures to adopt a new (unmandated) approach were not institutionalized. Linking education with rural communities was not the focus of the capacity-building institution selected, and there was little technical and financial support available from the IIRR to motivate it to take on this new function. Thus, the impact on community participation through the social laboratory approach (including 'one school and two villages') was limited. In addition, in 1997, the SEDC finally ended the Integrated Rural Education Programme (under which the CHINARR project functioned) and all related tasks were transferred to the vocational education division of the Department for Education. The Yunbiao vocational school was instructed to shift its focus to mechanical skills, away from the agricultural technology training programme relevant to the project. This decision reduced its linkages with farmers' needs and brought with it significant blockages to project implementation and sustainability.

At the provincial level, all related tasks were transferred to the vocational education division of the Department for Education. With no full-time person

designated for this project, several staff members took over the coordination role, fitting the work in with their own demanding schedules.. The previous collaborative project was transferred to their office by an administrative order. A heavy workload limited the time they could devote to the project. Any incentives that would motivate them to undertake people-centred development through participatory approaches were removed. With this new coordination arrangement, project implementation was affected, as exemplified by the delayed production of the second kit.

Given the institutional difficulties hampering progress, the IIRR project team, the provincial personnel and the county line agencies agreed that coordination responsibilities for the project would shift from provincial to county level. This brought the IIRR closer to local government and line agencies and represented a gradual move towards the community level. The IIRR remained in regular communication with provincial agencies on the progress of the project.

During Phase 2, the project became more focused on working with the county government, bureaux and service institutions, as well as linking these bureaux with rural villages and marginalized residential areas. However, this took place in the midst of unpredictable circumstances external to the project. These seriously impacted on the implementation of the project. The start of 2000 brought with it deadlines for a number of targets set by central government. This placed county government officials under pressure as they prepared for investigation by provincial government line agencies. The project was affected by many unexpected, unplanned visits by higher officials. This required many reports to be completed by the local staff for provincial or county government officials. Local officials had to be prepared for meetings at any time and to undertake additional tasks assigned by provincial government. The lack of any systematic planning and management of the government activities placed the planned activities of the IIRR project under threat. The project staff coped with this situation by working with those staff who were committed and wanted to be involved rather than with leaders from the various bureaux.

Over the years, the project has resulted in the exposure of some key local staff to participatory processes in planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation, and training activities. These staff members have reported that they have experienced changes within themselves as a result of these capacity-building activities, particularly activities with communities such as FFS and solid waste separation. When expanding the scope for solid waste separation, local officials responded to community opinion and instigated participation as the first step. They included a household survey and training event in their work (having learnt it in the collaborative project). The final challenge was to win over the mayor, who received constant feedback from involved local officials. Interestingly, his final response focused on what else could be achieved – specifically how this approach would contribute to economic gains and generate more revenue in the county.

Faced with escalating levels of poverty, the vocational school was asked to go out to the poor villages to assess the needs of farmers (the school had previously focused on teaching on campus). However, in response to the changing circumstances, it started sending teachers and students to villages to talk directly

with farmers. Although the project was unable to bring the school to the village as originally planned, it was able to develop the capacity of some teachers to a certain level through some of the training activities. From this perspective, one can see that one of the major strengths of working with government is that it is able to mobilize human resources when required. It can assign many people to work towards a common goal at a particular time. In some instances government assigned county-level staff to work in poor townships and villages for an extended period (up to a year) to help develop the area.

Policy influences

Generally speaking, local government established policy for township and village levels based on a combination of directives issued by upper levels of government fused with local politics, economy and social development. Most policies were operationalized as instructions. In the absence of upper-level policy, the local government had the mandate to formulate specific policies based on relevant laws, rules and regulations as well as research undertaken by concerned departments. The policy framework was set up in such a way that it would guide townships in their work. Township governments then issued instructions to guide village work and the VCs drafted rules and regulations to restrict the villagers' behaviour. Implementation of the policy was constrained, however, by finances and prevailing economic conditions. (Without counterpart funding, for example, it was extremely difficult to operationalize policies.)

The centralized systems and procedures in the education sector had significant impact on the use of materials developed in the project. In the production of health kits, for instance, a number of locally based teaching materials on the environment and occupational health were developed. However, even though the participatory methods were adopted by the education bureau and lesson plans for school teachers were further developed through the competition, the kits were not widely disseminated or adapted because all schools must use textbooks that have been developed for use nationwide. Any schools wishing to use additional reading material for students require special permission. However, the national policy has recently changed and it is hoped that this will encourage local people to develop more locally based textbooks and materials for schools.

In the case of SWM, the policy of solid waste separation was initiated in Hengxian without any policy or mandate from upper levels of government. It was a small pilot scheme operated outside the government system with coordinated inputs from all the agencies concerned. When the county began planning to expand the scheme, all the stakeholders felt the need to develop a set of guidelines to support the work. Usually, policy formulation on environmental issues is undertaken by the environmental protection bureau. However, in this case the EPB felt unable to act since the initiative had not come from upper-level government. Both these examples highlight a major pitfall in developing a bottom-up approach to planning and implementation in China. In helping to instigate such processes and taking part themselves, local government officials are putting themselves in the line of fire and they risk reprimand from superiors for supporting a new idea without a directive.

Key Issues Arising Throughout the Project

Project identification

At the preparation stage, problems in education were identified through a literature review, and field visits arranged by the SEDC. There was also some interaction with local government officials. In addition, IIRR staff visited Hengxian to collect secondary data and conduct a field visit to the school and two villages. There was some degree of interaction and discussion among IIRR staff, local officials and villagers through translation, but the stakeholders involved in the project identification stage were mainly from IIRR's China team, the education bureau at Hengxian and the Department for Education of Guangxi Province. Thus, project site identification was constrained and limited to the three sites to which the SEDC brought the IIRR team in 1993. At that time, the government was not yet willing to show the poverty-stricken areas. Hengxian was not a nationally designated poverty county at that time, although it contained pockets of poverty. Other constraints included the keenness to integrate government priorities, the lack of financial support to undertake baseline surveys at village level and the lack of information on which to base initial decision-making.

Project planning

Owing to the weak capacity of local partners at the beginning of the project, IIRR played a key role in developing the concepts and plans for implementation. The IIRR team developed the plans following consultation with local partners who then provided feedback for further revision. The long-term planning process provided space for innovative and creative planning for implementation based on the needs of local partners and people. However, three years after the implementation phase began, a review/reflection and planning workshop was conducted with local partners. Following the visit of a local government delegation to the Philippines, they expressed interest in and the need for the IIRR to conduct further training. Workshops were conducted to discuss a strategy to involve the local project leader (Vice-Mayor) and staff of related bureaux in the discussion and negotiation. During the Reflection workshop, the government officials involved in earlier activities expressed their concern that IIRR had planned each activity and that they had been placed in a passive position unable to contribute effectively.

In Phase 2 there was more interaction between IIRR staff and the local project team during planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation activities. Initially, the local project team, who were used to a top-down, command-based style of work, continued to ask what they should do, rather than thinking what to do and how to do it. However, through the processes of learning-by-doing, and with the benefit of greater interaction with outsiders, local stakeholders developed the planning skills needed. The involvement of local partners in the project planning and design increased from passive feedback in the first phase, to articulating ideas for the proposals, and then to active roles in initial planning. The attitude of the local bureau staff had also changed from passively waiting for

instructions about implementation to taking the initiative. As a result there were more local contributions to the nature of interventions made (eg, the Lesson Plan on Environmental Education and management of the Solid Waste Separation Project).

With more interaction and consultation, staff members from various bureaux were able to gain a better understanding of the essential purpose of the project:

> *'to achieve human development through participatory processes which build the capabilities of people. Rural Reconstruction is a human reform through an integrated approach. It aims to build people's capacity in a multi-functional manner, not only involving technical knowledge and expertise, but also social knowledge. It also includes organizing skills, communication skills, planning skills, etc. Participatory training and learning approaches are effective methods for providing opportunities for enhancing people's capacity'.*

Phase 2 therefore adopted a wider consultation process: both IIRR staff and local staff discussed and applied a mutual support strategy, which sought to utilize (1) the technical strengths and networking of international NGOs, universities and academic institutions and (2) the government administrative functions. This improved and strengthened the government function and mobilized community participation in monitoring and evaluation. For example, survey workshops with residents and home visit methods were used to develop a plan to pilot the Solid Waste Separation project. A survey helped all stakeholders to gain a better understanding of existing domestic waste collection and recycling system at county level, and residents' ideas and attitudes towards solid waste separation. A workshop was organized by project staff with related government agencies, the district committee, and the residents' representative to ensure wider consultation. The research results were shared among all participants and they discussed a solid waste separation plan based on survey results. According to the local project staff, 'residents were directly involved in the planning process and all the ideas for separation from resident communities reflected a kind of bottom-up approach that was different from the government's top-down approach'.

At the end of the project, the local staff who have been involved in the project realized for themselves the benefits of the approach:

> *'The key to achieving the objectives are: (1) to build local capacity to mobilize the full participation of government, community, schools and individual citizens; (2) to develop the full participation of the community and so reduce the government burden; and (3) to utilize external technical support to meet the objectives of reuse, recycling and avoidance of pollution in finding a solution for solid waste.'*

Project design

During the detailed project design stage, a number of initiatives aimed to obtain inputs from key officials and institutions – as well as from communities. During the development of the first kit, two workshops were conducted to discuss the content of the kit and its classification, layout, size and production constraints. The process usually started with presentations by the IIRR health specialists, with

the local health staff and other technical personnel making comments and recommendations for revisions. There were several revisions in the classification of the topics, the size and the process of producing the kit. Although the workshop was designed and facilitated in a participatory way, the director of the health bureau had more decision-making powers than others. Staff still had little space in which to express their ideas freely. Around 15 people from the education and enterprise departments and other related agencies participated alongside the health technical personnel. Village representatives were also consulted during the preparation stage.

Considering the request for the IIRR to train key personnel in various sectors (including government officials, township leaders, enterprise managers, teachers, village leaders and farmers in Hengxian) a situation analysis using a SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats) methodology was conducted. Based on the analysis and wider consultation with local government officials, school teachers, village leaders and participants who were involved in kit production, the key issues were identified (such as poor teaching quality, a sharp increase in pesticide and fertilizer use, and untreated waste). As a result a number of programmes were developed, including TOT on EE for teachers, IPM for extension workers, and SWM for environmental staff. The programmes aimed to reach more rural and urban communities by training government staff through this TOT programme. The overall project goals were consistent with the county plans and goals, and it was thought this could be maintained with regular review and feedback.

Project management

In the course of implementation, communication was revealed as a very important factor for improved project management. In the earlier stage, communication was undertaken remotely, often through fax. It was generally a one-way communication, although the intention was to obtain the partners' feedback and suggestions through a consultative process. This type of communication was not effective, as county personnel did not have much experience of working with an international organization and the ideas proposed by IIRR were quite new to them. Language was another factor.

Project implementation

Since the IIRR was operating remotely (both in terms of distance and time), more intensive support was required for the brief periods when IIRR staff were in Hengxian. One of the key concerns that was addressed at these times was the level of interaction and the ownership by all stakeholders in the capacity-building process. Local government officials were generally very supportive of these efforts, facilitating the linkages for various agencies with communities in workshops, and providing technical support with interpretation and translation. Significant support was necessary due to the lack of familiarity of the IIRR team with the local context.

Staff at all levels found the processes undertaken useful (such as the participatory kit production process, training using participatory methods, and

adult learning principles). They stated that what they learned through this method 'they would not forget for their whole lives'. These experiences laid a foundation for these participants to become actively involved in more activities and further enhance their understanding of the role of participation.

The following table presents the activities and processes carried out during the project. The involvement of all stakeholders and their participation in the activities did not develop in a linear manner. Interaction was partly based on the nature of the activity as well as the methods applied during the process.

Table 7.2 *Key project activities*

	Activities	*Process*
Phase 1	Initial visit	IIRR's China team visited Hengxian and the two villages. General information was provided but there was limited interaction with communities.
	Preparation visit for data collection	A team member visited Hengxian again, collecting data from Yunbiao vocational school and the two villages identified. Villagers were consulted through translation.
	Programme planning and need assessment for health kit and environmental education kit	A workshop was conducted to: • identify the specific needs at the county level, involving local authorities, health experts, environmental managers and educational bureau staff; • discuss with and get feedback from local experts (the initial list of topics developed by the IIRR health specialist was based on literature review); • introduce the participatory kit production process to key local government leaders and relevant bureaux.
	Occupational safety/ general health kit planning workshop	Arrangements for the workshop involved active interaction with technical staff from the health, education and enterprise bureaux, etc.
	Occupational safety/ general health kit workshop	A two-week workshop was conducted to produce the first draft of the health kit. It took six months for the book to be published. All post-workshop work was headed by the local coordinator at provincial level.
	Needs assessment for environmental kit production	Two IIRR staff prepared for the development of the environmental kit.
	Occupational health and safety/general health kit training and testing of IEC materials	The types of participants were defined by IIRR, and local government officials selected the local participants from vocational schools and pilot villages. The training, using adult-learning principles and participatory methods, produced a very positive response from participants.

Table 7.2 *cont.*

	Activities	*Process*
	Environmental education kit planning	The focus of this work was mainly on logistics. The decision-making was based on providing maximum support in local conditions.
	Environmental education kit workshop	The workshop was modified to one week on the suggestion of the local authorities– because of the costs of board and lodging. The workshop was managed to encourage participation.
	Post-workshop activity at IIRR	The post-workshop activity was mainly undertaken at IIRR, owing to institutional changes in China. Since limited time had been allocated for the write-up during the workshop, additional work was required for revision and further technical inputs.
Transition	Reflection workshop	This involved reflection and initial planning with bureau staff and county leaders who had previously participated. A training programme was also developed on request.
Phase 2	Planning for the China programme	A study visit was made to the Philippines to prepare the local people for the next phase. They also made requests to IIRR for training in various sectors.
	Environmental education training	A TOT for adult education teachers was conducted using adult-learning principles. Basic training skills were also introduced.
	Echo training	Echo training on environmental knowledge for communities.
	Familiarization visit	Project leaders' visit to the Philippines. An orientation workshop was conducted for local leaders on the concepts of development and participation. A new phase was also discussed with local authorities, bureau staff and the school principal. Budgets and counterparts were also discussed.
	Solid waste management training	A TOT for township leaders and environmental protection staff on SWM was conducted. Participants were quite active and resident representatives initiated ideas for solid waste separation in their communities.
	TOT on IPM on Rice	During the preparation for this three-month IPM training for 22 township extension workers, the initial thinking of the agriculture bureau leader differed from that of IIRR's technical personnel. The local authorities wanted training on vegetable IPM, whilst the IIRR, based on previous experience, suggested starting with rice. Thus, the initial interest was more limited.

Table 7.2 *cont.*

	Activities	*Process*
Phase 2 (*cont.*)	TOT on IPM on Rice (*cont.*)	During the three-month period, the training exercise received limited local technical support. The mobilization of farmers via cross visits, however, gave very positive results.
	Annual planning	There was a significant role for local bureau staff in the process of planning skill development. Initially it was difficult for them to come forward with ideas and undertake planning. IIRR staff played a key role in developing the plan for comments and suggestions and had significant interaction with the major bureaux involved.
	Solid waste pilot site preparation and implementation	Environmental protection leaders and staff, township leaders, environmental sanitation staff, residents' committee staff, school students and residents were involved in preparation and implementation of the project.
	Technical support for FFS organization and implementation	Involving 22 township extension workers, the FFS curriculum and budget were based on the local situation. Mobilization was improved by involving township support in organizing FFS .
	Lesson plan competition for EE integration into school curriculum	As a part of this competition for EE integration into the school curriculum, 300 teachers participated voluntarily, and 22 good lesson plans were selected and printed for wider use among schools.
	Teaching module development in Yunbiao vocational high school	Through training a specialized teacher in IPM, it was hoped that he could develop a teaching module based on IPM training and integrated into the vocational school teaching plan. The preparation was done and an outline was developed. It was not completed, however, because the support of school authorities to pursue this work was lacking.
	Monitoring and evaluation	Ten people from four bureaux were trained to use various PRA tools for monitoring and evaluation purposes. These ten people then conducted evaluations among 20 extension workers, 20 adult teachers and 20 student elementary teachers.
	Sharing workshop	After the evaluation, a sharing workshop was prepared and conducted with more than 200 people. A documentary video was produced and an exhibition was organized to present the project.
	Familiarization visit	As the solid waste separation project developed further, a group of local officials visited Hong Kong to see its experience of environmental protection and solid waste separation. A planning session was conducted with all bureaux and county leaders.

Table 7.2 *cont.*

	Activities	*Process*
Phase 2 (*cont.*)	Solid waste separation expansion period	The environmental sanitation station was able to undertake this activity on the basis of previous experience from the experimental stage. Residents actively participated in this activity.
	Negotiation with local authorities concerning social responsibility for SWM	The idea was to develop a model of public sector–NGO–private sector partnership in solid waste separation, composting and organic farming.

Monitoring and evaluation

During the project period, no monitoring and evaluation system was formally carried out. Local government had its own monitoring and evaluation system, and the original idea of developing a joint monitoring system proved difficult to operationalize. Monitoring and evaluation were carried out at the activity level. Often the work plan would be delayed or affected by government activities. The monitoring exposed some of the primary blockages and actions required, but this did not guarantee change in implementation.

Most evaluations were conducted through a process of self-reflection throughout the project. The participatory evaluation workshop provided a venue for local staff to assess the project outcomes. More than one hundred people were involved in project evaluation, using various PRA tools. However, the evaluation of impacts, especially of community perspectives, was not carried out. In addition, it was difficult to generate indicators at the beginning of the project and the constant change of local government staff made participatory evaluation difficult.

Within local government, monitoring and evaluation is limited to outputs. Additional study is required to consolidate the lessons and to determine at what level monitoring and evaluation systems in government can be changed to accommodate impact monitoring and evaluation assessment and to develop operational alternatives for improved monitoring and evaluation systems.

Fund management

A memorandum was signed with the county government, which agreed to provide counterpart funds.[7] The local government contributed significant financial resources at the beginning of the project to support workshop participation – a significant difference from other projects. However, with the downturn in economic growth during Phase 2, the revenue of local government declined and, given their obligation to submit a percentage of revenue to provincial and central governments, it became more difficult for them to contribute. This affected the implementation of activities towards the latter part of the project. In

general however, the fund contribution from local government to the project was quite important to the fulfilment of the project objectives from a participatory perspective.

Project sustainability

The project was focused on capacity building in various institutions in order to maintain project sustainability. In the Chinese top-down system, capacity building must start by changing attitudes by instruction (direct pressure from above). This means officials will shift from being passive receivers to initiators. They will be mobilized to take responsibility. According to the local staff, they considered that:

> *'Grass-roots workers and farmers are front liners with rich field experience. They are not familiar with advanced management models, technologies and environmental concepts. Participatory methods can enhance their experience, sharing and learning so that they can consolidate what they have learned about management models, concepts and technologies and translate this into their practices to achieve sustainable community development.'*

As the issue of sustainability was built into the design of the project, it was not necessary to consider sustainability-related issues during the process. However the constant turnover of staff did threaten the process and additional effort was required to counter any negative impact.

Factors affecting participation

The local government staff summarized the nature and growth of participation in the project cycle in the following statement:

> *'The overall project implementation reflected the participation of government, schools, and communities from a passive stage, graduating to a collaborative mode, and then to active participation for development.'*

The factors affecting participation and commitment to change included:

- *Constant turnover of staff:* The turnover of staff – a result of the People's Congress elections and government restructuring – affected the process of developing attitudinal change. The promotion of local project staff who were experienced in the project left a gap in experience and knowledge. Staff transfers were driven by the administrative system and not by individuals.
- *Organizational change constrained the commitment of some agencies:* The EPB has the function of monitoring and evaluating environmental standards. Solid waste separation involved various bureaux such as the urban construction bureau, since any construction related to dumping sites requires the approval of this bureau while collection of waste falls under the environmental sanitation station, which is under the supervision of the township government. Constraints arose to implementing solid waste separation plans because the EPB

does not have the right to invite the urban construction bureau to participate in the project (it must be managed and coordinated by local government). This significantly affected project implementation. The lack of collaboration among various bureaux was another constraint. While a high level of initiative was shown by staff from each bureau, existing institutional arrangements and procedure constrained them from participating because they had their own tasks and scope of work.

- *Financial difficulties:* Financial constraints limited the number of people able to participate in the project. For example, the expansion of the solid waste separation project was limited by funds despite the fact that other parts of the county wanted to take part. Many misunderstood the reasons for this lack of expansion (thinking that separation was not implemented in their areas because of a lack of confidence in them).
- *Lack of incentives for participation:* Although the solid waste separation project established a monitoring and evaluation team and there were incentives for households to understand the requirements of separation, monitoring was not able to continue. Households not separating correctly had a negative impact on households undertaking the task properly.
- *Patchy skills amongst project and technical staff:* The level of knowledge and skills of project and technical staff in training programmes limited participation. Their understanding affected their echo training of farmers, students and residents on related topics. Sometimes, their understanding and internal learning led to conflict with local officials.
- *Lack of policy support for operation/implementation:* After piloting, the success cannot be developed into local regulations or guidance for operation.
- *Limited capacity within some governmental departments:* Owing to reorganization, some bureaux (eg, education and health) lacked staff and could not fully participate in and support the project.

The factors which underpinned the promotion of participation were:

- *Focusing on the issues of communities:* The project focused on issues that concerned the community and not those that interested the officials.
- *Being demand-driven:* In the implementation of the solid waste separation project, the local project staff realized the importance and effectiveness of a bottom-up approach. They started to be more responsive to community demands.
- *Encouragement from international sources:* International recognition and confirmation encouraged local project staff to pursue their work more actively.
- *Recognition of accomplishments:* Being honoured and recognized by people and government is important in the cultural context. Currently, the local EPB is applying for a national award for the solid waste separation project.
- *Responsibilities:* Being given more responsibility is recognition of the individual's capacity and confirmation of his/her contribution.
- *Government requirement*s: Since most local project staff are from the government, they need recognition and confirmation that the approach they adopted is a government requirement – to dispel the fear that they are not doing their job.

Key Stakeholders and the Process of Establishing the Participatory Initiative

The difference between this project and most others lies in the target audience. CHINARR focused on the local government authorities and service institutions to enhance their capacity to provide better services – to become demand-driven. This was achieved by building their capacity for participatory methods and approaches, by changing their attitudes towards farmers and by promoting better understanding of participation. Thus the project was started with a participatory workshop producing IEC materials. Following various participatory training activities linking rural communities in terms of health, environmental knowledge and agricultural production, the approach was seen as helping to meet the needs of people.

The target audience included local government officials, staff from various bureaux at an institutional level, technical personnel such as adult education teachers and teachers from the vocational school, agriculture extension workers, doctors and environmental protection staff at service delivery level, villagers, students from the vocational school, farmers and residents.

At the completion of implementation, the local staff summarized major stakeholders of this project and their roles and responsibilities. These are presented in Table 7.3.

Capacity building of secondary stakeholders included:

- *Echo training*: All participants who attended the TOT were required to conduct echo training of the people they were supposed to serve. This included village health worker training, and FFS at each township. Institutionalization at township level was also attempted, through an appraisal scheme for the township leaders in support of FFS. This could not be undertaken owing to institutional constraints. A simple monitoring follow-up was conducted, but proved weak in developing mechanisms for establishing active participation at community level.
- *Pilot projects:* Some pilot projects involving implementation by participants at community level – such as a biogas project and a health education project – were undertaken. But they were not effectively implemented because sufficient technical support could not be provided, and it was assumed that the participants themselves would be capable of implementing without support.
- *Community factors:* Factors such as the relationship of village leaders with villagers were critical to widespread participation at community level. The farming style varies from village to village and consequently extension workers could not accommodate all the differing needs of farmers. At the same time they faced a concern that they would not be respected if they were not able to help farmers solve their problems. Attitudes towards problem solving were therefore another factor affecting community participation.

There were some successful extension workers, however, who had a very good technical knowledge and with training developed a better social understanding,

Table 7.3 *Stakeholder roles and responsibilities*

Primary stakeholders	*Roles*	*Responsibilities*
Project level	Overall design and planning Monitoring and evaluation	• To plan for the main activities, principles and strategies; to identify agencies and staff to be involved • To provide training to key personnel at the local level to coordinate implementation • To facilitate with participating agencies preparation of the work plan and to organize for implementation • To monitor fund use by providing regular monitoring and feedback on the progress of the work • To supervise project implementation to ensure its scientific correctness and systematic cooperation
Institutional level	Support and coordination (county staff) Implementation (township and village staff)	• Administrative delegation to ensure related agencies providing support • To coordinate collaboration among government agencies • To develop and operationalize the detailed implementation plan and implement the plan • To mobilize community, farmers and residents to participate in the project • To strengthen communication among different agencies
Community level	Implementation, monitoring and dissemination (farmers, residents, teachers)	• To assist the organization and implementation of the project • To monitor implementation • To disseminate environmental knowledge

and were able to service farmers' needs better. The following story illustrates this success.

> *'Mr Huang Fajiu, from Nanyang township, attended a three-month training course on IPM and organizing FFS. He applied what he learned in his daily work, such as farmers' training and technology extension. Before, like many other extension workers, he had been bringing various agricultural inputs for farmers and wanting to sell as much as possible to farmers for profit. The training he conducted previously had been related mainly to selling his products. His new training sessions, however, were very different from his previous training style. He asked questions of the farmers about the key issues they wanted to know or learn about. Then, he would write these down on the blackboard and explain them one by one, using a number of visuals and cards. Farmers enjoyed his training, and now everywhere he goes he is warmly welcomed by farmers. He has conducted training courses in more than ten villages.'*

Institutionalization of Participatory Processes

In the early 1990s, the key issue and challenge in rural education in China was the lack of effective strategies and mechanisms for integrated rural education. This led to a shortage of specialized personnel and lower-level workers in rural areas. With the transition from central planning to a market economy, the traditional top-down approach changed. Decentralization passed new responsibilities to local government, but the local capacity remained limited. The service delivery system had weakened. Farmers needed to cope with these changes and were not able to demand the services they needed. This project sought to assist local government to serve the people by building their capacity to undertake participatory processes. The project targeted local government officials, staff from service delivery institutions, and village communities.

The various interventions in Hengxian have shown that community participation can be achieved by:

Skills development for both field staff and farmers According to local staff, grass-roots workers and farmers are in the frontline of development. They have rich field experience. Improving understanding of participatory approaches can enhance their ability to share their experiences and to adopt new concepts in the tasks they undertake. They are uniquely placed to influence farmers' attitudes, to institutionalize the participatory process and to build technical capacity and social understanding.

Monitoring and evaluation Institutionalization of participatory processes relies on establishing a good monitoring and evaluation system. To promote community participation, participatory indicators should be developed and built into performance appraisal for government and service staff.

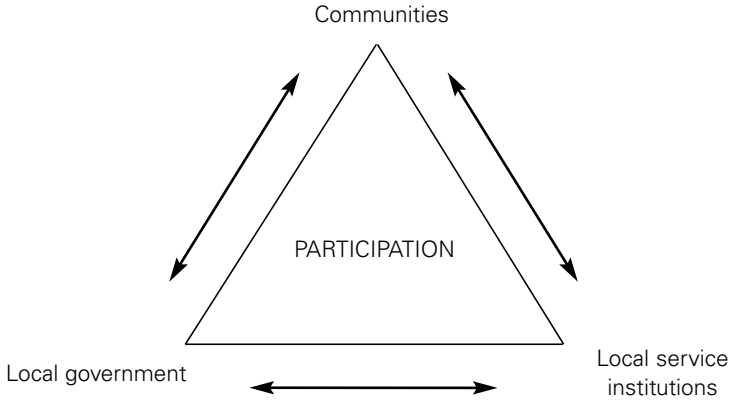
Financial systems The availability and management of finances are critical for institutionalizing community participation. Funding for community capacity building and public monitoring and evaluation systems are key elements.

Community capacity and organizations Local communities require capacity building for participation. This also includes articulating their views and what they want or need. Communities need to be organized in a way that responds effectively to issues that require collective action.

Attitudinal change Government needs to change attitudes toward community involvement and give more space through policy and information support. Service institutions need to equip themselves with both technical and social skills, and develop an attitude of learning-by-doing with farmers in a partnership approach.

To summarize, it is critical to build community capacity to demand better services. However, it is more important to ensure local authorities support action with policies that, in turn, support local service institutions (in both financial and

technical terms) so that they can respond to the needs of farmers and provide better services. By building the foundations of participation in all these three groups (as shown in the triangle below), there is an equal platform for their interaction and efforts are mutually reinforced.



Notes

1 Translated by Lu Caizheng. Edited by Janelle Plummer.
2 The research leading to this case study was based on an adapted version of the research framework developed for all case study teams. The work was carried out by Zhang Lanying, the team coordinator and principal researcher, and supported by Lu Caizheng. The case study activities were carried out with local government officials by first explaining the objectives, the research framework and questions regarding participation. Reflecting on the capacity-building process throughout the project cycle constituted the main focus for this research. The coordinator provided some feedback and technical input to some extent during this process. The Final Report on the CHINARR project and the Participatory Evaluation Workshop Report conducted in 2000 provided an important secondary source for this study.
3 In this chapter the term rural education is used to refer to education in rural development.
4 In 1985, after 36 years abroad, Dr Yen made a historic return to China at the invitation of the National People's Congress with the purpose of studying the progress of China's rural education programme. He made a second visit in 1987. Following his visit, the relationship between the IIRR, the State Education Commission and other Chinese agencies developed.
5 The first, *Occupational Health and Safety/General Health*, had a print-run of 7000 copies, while 5500 copies of the second, *People and Environment*, were produced.
6 Target groups include vocational school and adult education teachers, and health and extension workers.
7 This was mainly used for board and lodging for local people who were involved in project activities, land transportation for the international staff and communication.

8

Participatory Resettlement: Key Issues and Processes in Resettlement in Xiaolangdi and Hexi

Chen Shaojun, Shi Guoqing, Zhu Wenlong and Xu Jiajun[1]

Background

Development projects, particularly in the areas of water conservancy and hydropower, can result in substantial removal and reconstruction activities. If the problems are not resolved appropriately, many difficulties can be created, both for production and for the living standards of the resettlers. Resettlement can also produce conflicts. If these risks are not adequately managed, serious social problems can emerge, resulting in impoverishment. Since the 1950s, a total of 45 million people have been resettled in China, with 12 million alone resettled as a result of dam construction.[2] According to an investigation in 1985, after resettlement about one-third of dam resettlers lived in poverty. These people are vulnerable in the areas of land, grain, employment, housing, transportation, water supply, education, and health. After 1985, resettlement became a major issue in China. Relevant policy and legal systems have been established and improved. The management of resettlement has been greatly improved, and compensation standards have become more realistic. Currently, lack of adequate community participation is becoming an important issue in resettlement, and is already important in research on resettlement.

Different stakeholders have different perspectives on participation. For example, the aim of the project developer is to spend as little as possible relocating project-affected people, thereby ensuring maximum profit. The aim of the local government is to obtain maximum compensation from the project developer to implement resettlement and rehabilitation. The aim of the design institute is to obtain all the necessary information to prepare the resettlement action plan which will be approved by the State Development Planning Commission. For involuntary resettlers, the objective is to gain sufficient

information about the project, in order to achieve the highest rate of compensation and the best land, through participation.

Participation by resettlers and the affected community, as primary stakeholders in the resettlement activities, is one of the key factors in the success of the development project. The aims of increasing participation in the resettlement process are: (1) to increase resettlers' knowledge of all their options in resettlement relocation activities; (2) to ensure compensation in removal, recovery of livelihoods and community reconstruction; and (3) to assuage resettlers' fears that they will lose access to land resources and to their subsistence, community and social relations networks, or be deceived in the complicated negotiations on their rights to compensation and relocation, and to empower resettlers to decide on issues related to their production and living standards.

The lack of effective participatory and consultative approaches in resettlement may lead to inappropriate policy, incorrect decisions and impoverishment of resettlers. Affected populations may disapprove of project construction, possibly resulting in social disorder, failure to achieve project aims, increasing costs, or the abandonment of the project.

Compared with the government, owners and design institutions, resettlers and the community are generally in a vulnerable situation. They either have a weak voice, or are voiceless. If local government or design institutions haven't fully understood the importance of participation and lack participatory consciousness, if they don't establish a participatory system and adopt effective participatory methods, there will be no effective participation of the resettlers and the community.

Currently many problems need to be researched and resolved. The most important of these are:

- Participation within current construction operations is very limited. Requirements for resettler participation in devising and implementing regulations have been put forward, but practical operable regulations and specific implementation rules have still to be established.
- Resettlers and affected communities are not effectively involved in resettlement activities such as compensation, relocation options, infrastructure and reconstruction.
- Participation by affected communities lacks clear policies, effective mechanisms, and successful modes of operation.
- The participatory capacity of resettlers and the affected community is particularly deficient, and requires effective development to promote and enhance resettlers' participatory awareness.
- Theoretical approaches are weak, and there are few cases on which to build.
- Participatory evaluation of the resettlement system is inadequate.

The aim of participatory case research is twofold: first, to undertake research on specific participatory methods operative in the resettlement field; second, to put forward strategies and methods for participatory resettlement, suggesting ways in which it can be combined with current resettlement practices.

The legal framework

Special attention is paid to the consultation and participation of resettlers in the project in order to: (1) formulate the resettlement action plan (RAP); (2) implement the RAP efficiently; (3) guarantee the legal status of resettlers; (4) mitigate against negative impacts caused by project construction; and (5) achieve the aims of resettlement and development. Participation includes involvement in the socio-economic survey and the preparation and implementation of the RAP. During the consultation, the opinions of resettlers should be considered.

There are a number of general and more specific laws and regulations that impact on the resettlement of displaced people in China, and upon their participation in the process. The Land Administration Law is designed so that the twin processes of land acquisition and resettlement are as transparent and as fair as possible. The law makes provision for compensation, setting out criteria for entitlement and describing legal procedures for land requisition.

In urban areas the law on the Regulation of Urban House Removal and Management states that in construction, once a house removal licence has been issued, the removal sector should immediately promulgate the demolition scope and deadline for relocation with a clear explanation of points and issues to those affected. Furthermore, the law states that the removal sector should 'grant compensation and settlement to the house owner'.

The Stipulations for the Implementation of Regulations on Land Management provide that when there is dissatisfaction with the level of compensation the people's government (at levels above the county) will enter into the discussion to try and achieve compromise. If this fails, the case is adjudicated by the people's government that approved the original land acquisition.

The Law on the Organization of Village Committees defines a VC as an autonomous organization at grass-roots level, able to self-manage, self-educate and self-serve. It provides a mechanism for the organization of villagers for participation and consultation, and represents the opinions and requirements of villagers to the People's Government. It also handles public affairs and welfare.

Stakeholder analysis

Stakeholders can be divided into two groups: those with an intermediate role (secondary stakeholders) and those directly affected (primary stakeholders). In resettlement planning and implementation, primary stakeholders include project-affected persons (including relocated and host area people) and resettled communities, the project owner, and the implementing agent (usually the appropriate department identified by the local government). The owner and the implementing agent play a key function in resettlement relocation activities, and are responsible for developing a resettlement plan, financing and implementation. Secondary stakeholders include organizations related to the project, such as the sector management department, the local government, the institutions responsible for planning and design and for monitoring and evaluation, and non-governmental organizations.

Primary stakeholders

Both resettlers and communities in host areas are directly affected by the project. Resettlers lose their land, houses and infrastructure, whilst host communities are threatened with a loss of livelihood as resources are shared with the new arrivals. In terms of participation these core groups should be active at every stage of the project cycle.

The rural community is represented by the VC. Each committee may represent the interests of over 300 households and is composed of a smaller number of residential groups determined by the geographic distribution of housing stock. Village and residential groups play important roles during the implementation phase of a resettlement plan. The VC can become involved in land adjustment, location of housing units, management of collective properties, land compensation, employment issues and other activities.

In large urban areas the primary unit of community organization is the residents' committee. During the resettlement process residents' committees assist district, county government and resettlement institutions both in undertaking socio-economic surveys and in the actual process of relocation. Residents' committees also act as the main channel of appeal for resettlers.

The role of the project owner in resettlement is particularly complex. The project owner (employer) is formally responsible for the main resettlement work. However, because land is owned collectively with no market for land exchange, resettlement work and land acquisition are contracted to local government.

The institution responsible for resettlement implementation varies by government department. Resettlement involving the Ministry of Water Resources (or the Ministry of Electric Power) is organized and implemented by government at the national level. In urban construction, however, resettlement is implemented by the local urban house removal institution. Land acquisition and demolition in rural areas involving railways, highways, or the hydroelectric power sector is overseen by the resettlement service in the department of land management at the county level.

In the planning phase, the implementing organization:

- cooperates with the design institution in conducting a socio-economic investigation and resettlement plan.

In the implementation phase the implementing organization is responsible for:

- modifying the resettlement plan;
- checking socio-economic investigation data;
- planning the location of housing stock;
- house demolition and reconstruction;
- compensation payment and infrastructure construction; and
- production development and income restoration guidance.

Secondary stakeholders

In relation to secondary stakeholders, there are three levels. The first is the administrative level of the central government: the State Council and its ministries and

institutions. The second is the management sector and the concerned government agencies of provincial, municipal and county government, including the land management sector, the house removal management sector, and the supervising and auditing sector. The third encompasses institutions for designing and servicing that are employed to work for the project owner, such as the design institution, the monitoring and evaluation institution, and the consulting institution.

The land management sector plays a key role in resettlement activities and is responsible for policy formulation and the approval and monitoring of plans. At the national level the main land management institution is the Ministry of Land and Resources. At the regional level, responsibility is taken by the land management sector of the provincial, municipal, county and township levels of government. Their tasks include the enforcement of national laws and regulations relating to land use; the approval of land use and land transfer for resettlement, involvement in the examination of resettlement plans, the issuing of land-use licences, guidance and coordination in the process of land acquisition and relocation, and dealing with problems relating to this process. The Ministry of Construction oversees urban house removal. In each administrative region this is then administered by either the real estate sector of local government or another authorized department.

In the water resources and hydropower sectors, the Ministry of Water Resources, the State Economic Trade Commission (in charge of water and electricity plants and reservoir resettlement), the office of the Three Gorges Project (in charge of resettlement in the Three Gorges Project) and the reservoir resettlement institution at the provincial and city levels are responsible for resettlement monitoring, coordination, and management in their administrative regions.

Resettlement planning and design units

In China, the technical works for reservoir resettlement planning are prepared largely by design institutions affiliated to the Ministry of Water Resources and the National Power Corporation. At a provincial/ministerial level this has involved the government working with professionals from specialist research institutions who are able to bring to bear skills in survey design and implementation, resettlement planning and engineering that are not available in the government sector. There are no professionals skilled in resettlement planning within the formal planning and design institutions of other sectors.

The resettlement monitoring and evaluation process is generally undertaken by external agencies. These include research/academic institutions, consultancy services and professional divisions of the department of design and planning in the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences. However, monitoring and evaluation has so far been restricted to the Three Gorges Dam project, and to projects financed by the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank.

The main NGOs engaged in resettlement work are the National and Provincial Reservoir Economic Committee and the Urban House Removal Committee. Their main functions are academic exchange and consultation.

Resettlement relocation activity and participation

Preparatory phase

The preparatory stage includes project identification, a feasibility study, preliminary design and design approval. The resettlement work in this phase involves undertaking a socio-economic survey and the preparation of a resettlement plan.

Although the level of participation varies from project to project, in general the socio-economic survey is characterized by a high degree of community participation. In many resettlement projects, government resettlement institutions work together with township, village, and village representatives in conducting a survey or inventory of assets that face loss through inundation. Aspects of this survey include measurement of property, registration and calculation of value. All the data are then signed and sealed by the village representatives and resettlers or property right owners, before approval by township and county government. In the investigation, data are collected and the opinions of resettlers, village groups and local government on the resettlement plan are solicited.

The community plays little part in setting the level of compensation for land acquisition. The government promulgates or disseminates the policy, providing standards and regulations from which households can calculate entitlement. In addition, the resettlement plan is not always made very public. The township government, village committees, village groups and resettlers rarely see the approved plan, despite a desire to know the details.

Implementation phase

The implementation phase starts once the preliminary design has been approved. Generally, the contract is signed first between the project owner and the government at a provincial level. Then the other levels (province, city, county, township, village) sign the contract or agreements. During this phase, the local government will modify and complete the resettlement plan and the implementation design, according to the resettlement plan approved in the preliminary design stage.

Many complicated tasks are conducted in this phase, including housing demolition, relocation, the allocation of tasks and organization of human resources, land distribution for housing and production activities, public infrastructure and the reconstruction of new housing stock, community facilities, reconstruction, fund management, dispute resolution, and coordination.

Participation in implementation refers in this case to the selection of a resettlement site, house reconstruction, and the consideration of resettlers' opinions in these processes. Usually, resettlers receive a new plot of land for housing by drawing lots in a process that is fair and open. The compensation rate and payment due to each individual for loss of housing, plants, and other assets is published openly. These rates are disseminated and overseen by the resettlers themselves. The use of compensation received for collective assets (including land and resettlement subsidies for production activities and assets) is usually determined by the community leader, with some degree of participation by

resettlers. The level of this participation varies; in some villages it can be quite limited and the procedure not transparent. Although there is a collective right to ownership of this compensation, it is one aspect of the resettlement process which tends to be overlooked by resettlers, and one that doesn't facilitate participatory practice.

Income restoration stage

Following relocation, the main task of resettlement is the development of production and, with it, income recovery. Although this usually includes both agricultural and non-agricultural sectors, the economy, environment and skill base of rural areas lends itself to agricultural development. With a guaranteed grain ration, efforts to restore income focus on cultivating barren hills and barren land and developing animal husbandry. Non-agricultural income recovery usually focuses on attracting more investment and funds. Developing the secondary and tertiary sector is another effective measure for increasing resettlers' incomes and absorbing local labour. The scale and scope of the project will ultimately be judged on the carrying capacity of the local environment, the health and orientation of the local economy, and the skills available in the local labour market.

Resettlement income recovery activities are mainly organized by resettlers and the community (VC, village groups), creating a degree of participation that is higher than in other phases of the process. Most resettlers come from the agricultural sector, with skills in planting, livestock and aquaculture, and their experience and expertise enable resettlers to arrange and organize agricultural activities as they choose. The success of this arrangement can vary. Because land compensation and relocation subsidies for production are owned and used collectively by the village and village groups, the level of participation depends on how transparently the VC operates in line with its guiding principles of democracy, self-governance and self-management.

Monitoring and evaluation

External independent monitoring is usually carried out by a research institution, college/university, design institute, or social science academy. According to World Bank monitoring and evaluation guidelines, the personnel undertaking the monitoring process must use participatory methodology for monitoring and evaluation. The progress and status of land acquisition, relocation, compensation, fund utilization, and implementation is monitored and evaluated. The level of income recovery in sampled households is traced. All problems and solutions are fed back to the project owner and local resettlement department.

Women's participation

Formally, resettlement in China pays particular attention to the protection of the interests and rights of women. Regulated in the Law on the Protection of Women's Rights and Interests, women have the same rights as men in political, economic, social and family areas of life. This is also the case with assets

compensation, house land and farmland allocation, and employment and participation in public affairs during resettlement. In these processes, no women should be subjected to any discrimination in law. Moreover, during resettlement, women whose registered permanent residences are in the resettled village as a result of marriage have won the right to participate in farmland reallocation in advance.[3]

The All-China Women's Federation has branches in the provinces, cities, counties and villages. Its central responsibility is to protect women's rights, improve their economic status, develop women's education and technical training, and to promote equality. Local branches of the Women's Federation play very important roles in resettlement, assisting in disseminating resettlement policies and organizing women to take part in resettlement activities. In reality, however, women's participation varies from one region to another.

Current laws and regulations do not clearly regulate women's participation. There are also cases in which women do not participate, largely for four reasons:

1 Traditional gender work divisions and cultural concepts.[4]
2 Insufficient attention is given to women's interests. The ideas or schemes proposed by women often cannot get the attention of community decision-makers and relevant government departments.
3 The collective compensation fund does not directly affect women, so they are not active in this area.
4 Women's relatively low education level also affects their participation.

The Xiaolangdi Resettlement Project Case Study

Resettlement background[5]

The Xiaolangdi Dams Project in the Yellow River Basin was identified as a high priority key state project in China's eighth five-year plan (1991–6). The creation of a 130km-long reservoir behind the dam directly affected 188,000 people in eight counties, covering 174 villages and 29 towns.

Funded by a World Bank loan of US$110 million, resettlement was divided into two components; the resettlement of those in the reservoir area and the construction of new settlements in host counties. The resettlement was carried out in three phases: 46,000 were moved in the first phase between 1994 and 1997; 126,000 were moved in the second phase (completed by the end of 2000); and work is now in progress to move 23,000 people in the third and final stage.

Participatory resettlement activities review[6]

Stakeholders

Primary stakeholders participating in the relocation include resettlers displaced by the reservoir, inhabitants in host areas and their respective community organizations, the VC, village groups, and temporary groups formed to assist in the resettlement, including groups for house construction and financial supervision.

BOX 8.1 REGISTRATION IN YUNLIN VILLAGE

In 1994, in accordance with the Inundated Assets Review Guidelines for the Yellow River Xiaolangdi Dams in the Design Phase, the design institution under the Yellow River Committee and relative departments in Yuanqu County began to register people in Yunlin village, Gucheng town. They looked at each house and its associated land; each enterprise and infrastructure, including roads and communications. Because the investigators were not familiar with the village, however, and there were changes in the composition of housing tenure over time, when the VC repeated the survey process in 1994 (and made it public in 1997) they found mistakes and omissions in the questionnaire. For example, it was found that some brick–wood homes had been registered as earth–wood, and a brick kiln registered as an earth kiln. Furthermore, five households were not registered at all. The villagers notified the VC of these errors in writing, and the VC then reported the facts to the town and county resettlement office. In 2000 the design team in the Yellow River Committee and the county and village resettlement office worked together to check the facts. Now, compensation for the lost assets of this village has been finalized and mistakes rectified. Payments were first paid to the county resettlement office before distribution to resettlers.

The central government is represented by the resettlement development bureau of the Ministry of Water Resources. This in turn manages the Xiaolangdi resettlement bureau. In this umbrella structure, the project then feeds through local government and its respective resettlement offices located at the provincial/municipal/county/town levels.

The resettlement process was examined in three stages:

1 inundated assets investigation, confirmation and compensation;
2 resettlement site choice;
3 resettlement planning and implementation.

The inundated assets investigation was carried out through a socio-economic survey as part of the initial design phase in 1986, and re-examined in more depth in 1994 by a working group led by a design team from the Yellow River Committee supported by members of the provincial resettlement office, the land acquisition section of the local resettlement office, and village representatives. The survey was undertaken in each county, household by household. The main component of this survey was the investigation, measurement and registration of housing stock and associated land. Village representatives confirmed details of affected collective land and property by signature and stamp, with householders confirming details of their homes and property in the same manner. The survey also recorded the income and employment characteristics of households. This information provided the basis for the planning and design of the resettlement areas, and for levels of compensation (see Box 8.1).

Resettlement site choice

On the basis of this investigation, survey, and consultation (led by the design team of the Yellow River Committee), a rehabilitation scheme was approved by

BOX 8.2 SITE SELECTION BY HETI VILLAGE

In the case of Heti Village in Yuanqu County, representatives of the county resettlement office and officials from other concerned sector departments met with villagers to discuss a proposed resettlement site.

Most villagers didn't accept the site. They thought that the terrain was too high and cold in the winter, as well as being too dry, owing to the poor condition of the soil. Drinking water would depend upon the pumping of ground water.

The planning department accepted their opinion and agreed that the villagers should themselves decide on a site in their county. After the village meeting, it was decided to set up three teams with people from each household to scour the county for a more appropriate location. Unable to reach agreement on possible sites after three months of searching and discussion, the local branch of the Party and the VC agreed to the original site choice of the planning department as the most appropriate site.

the State Planning Committee. Planning for the location of new settlements was undertaken by the technical personnel of the planning and design institute of the Yellow River Commission, representatives of the village committees from both resettled and host areas, and representatives of the local resettlement office, in consultation with local communities. This is demonstrated in Box 8.2.

Resettlement planning and implementation

After the selection of a resettlement site, the next step involved the planning and implementation of a residential site plan. County governments attach great importance to this phase. An investigation team was established to discuss and agree on the site plan. This comprised the planning institution and representatives from the VC, the host village and the administrative departments of local government.

BOX 8.3 ALLOCATION OF LAND IN XIAPO VILLAGE

Villagers in Xiaobo village, Wangmao town, with 319 households (1039 villagers) were moved to resettlement sites. Because the original house foundation land and some fields in Xiaobo village were submerged, the Wangmao town government allocated some land in Xiapo village to Xiaobo village to build housing. Because the land allocated from Xiapo village was good farmland, Xiapo village negotiated four times with Xiaobo village, but failed. Later, the village Party committee and the VC separately held meetings with group leaders. In this way the villagers reached a common understanding. At the meeting, the committee analysed the situation, suggesting that the wasteland of the village be used as house land. The villagers discussed the suggestion, and passed it by a vote of hands. Finally, all villagers agreed to use over 170 mu of wasteland as resettlers' housing land. The VC then submitted a written report to the town and county request offices, asking to change the housing land site, and the request was approved.

BOX 8.4 LAND ALLOCATION IN HEDI VILLAGE

Hedi village in Yuanqu County has developed an innovative method of land allocation, described locally as 'to decide the area by production and decide the production by area'. In accordance with a resettlement plan for Yuanqu County, the villagers of Hedi were relocated to a site at Huafeng. Homes were constructed near the village government building, and farmland allocated within three kilometres of the settlement. After completing the relocation, the VC organized villagers so that they cultivated land collectively for one year. After this, they undertook a joint evaluation of the productivity of the area ('deciding the area by production'). The land was then allocated to each household, for them to 'decide the production by area', that is, to decide the most productive crops for cultivation on the land.

This process of allocation was led by the VC, which, after several rounds of discussion, agreed a strategy and set up an allocating team comprising the village head, an accountant, and 16 representatives from four village groups. Led by the head of the village, the team conducted field-work on the farmland and divided it into plot types, based on productivity, soil type and quality, water source and distance from the settlement. Because there were four residents' teams, each plot type was divided into four parts and divided again into several smaller parts. During the process of allocating land to the team, representatives from each team were able to choose four parts of each type of plot. After the teams had chosen the land they desired, the remaining land was allocated by lot.

Participation in land allocation

Land adjustment in resettlement has three components: general land allocation, allocation of land for production, and the allocation of land for residential use. County- and village-level governments organize resettlers and farmers at the new resettlement site for participation in these processes.

This method of land allocation allows the resettled villagers to use their own knowledge and judgement in a manner that is fair and transparent, and enables them to participate in an activity that 'builds the community'. 'Decide the area by production and decide the production by area' is being promoted throughout Yuanqu County.

Participation in resettlement fund administration

In order to make good use of compensation, and to ensure the rapid restoration of livelihoods, resettlement teams at county level issue guidelines on compensation. In Yuanqu, for example, it was decided that compensation of less than 50,000 yuan should be agreed at a village representative meeting; compensation of more than 50,000 yuan should be agreed first at a village meeting or representative meeting, and then a project proposal should be presented to the VC and approved by the township government and county resettlement office.

Women's participation

Women have participated widely in the resettlement phase of the Xiaolangdi Dam project. With their male counterparts, women have participated in the

BOX 8.5 BUDGET REVIEW PROCESSES IN XIAOBO VILLAGE

An example of this fund administration can be seen in the 25–28 project in Xiaobo village in Yuanqu County. The village head and a village fund supervision group (made up of three representatives elected by the villagers) check their village's monthly expenditure and approve a budget for each forthcoming month (from the 25th to the 28th of each month). The group discusses the budget with the VC and village Party members and, once a decision has been made, resident teams can take it away for further discussion. Their opinions are then fed back to the Party branch, which collates and redistributes comments at a village meeting for final approval of permitted expenditure. Every six months the village submits a financial report to the group for consideration. The VC publishes the final information and comments, and asks the villagers for their comments. If there are any discrepancies, villagers can report them to the village secretary for investigation.

process of moving, land allocation and house construction. In traditional rural society the farmer has three main aims: the construction of a home, marriage and the raising of a family. The construction of a new home following relocation is thus particularly important. Households often take the chance to improve their living conditions, enlarge their land area, and generally improve the quality of their lives. If their economic situation is tight, relatives are approached for loans. In rural China it is customary that, following marriage, the wife joins her husband's family. Since the husband's brothers and sisters will usually be part of the relocation, there are great demands on the husband's family for money lending. As a consequence it is not uncommon for a husband to approach his wife's family for finance, thus giving the wife more voice in financial decision-making and the manner of rebuilding. This serves to lift the status of women in the home.

In rural China, women play a major part in the agricultural system, carrying the burden of agricultural production and family care, as men often work in the industrial sector, assisting their wives only in the business aspects of farming. In the Xiaolangdi project, women are thus often the main channel for the development of production and income restoration, particularly through plantation agriculture and poultry breeding. Women also participate in more traditional activities, such as the manufacture of handicrafts, the rearing of livestock, and the tending of vegetable greenhouses. The revenue that these activities generate for women serves to enhance their economic and political status. However, women continue to participate less in decision-making and management than their male counterparts.

Women's Federation

The Women's Federation, acting through female cadres at the village level, plays a significant part in resettlement. In the choice of resettlement site, the move, production development, income restoration and training, women cadres act as exemplars. They persuade resettlers, act as mediators for dispute resolution and problem solving, and address women's problems – all of which helps advance the project towards its goals. However, women's organizations at county and village level seldom participate in the phases of resettler investigation, planning and implementation.

Factors affecting community participation

External environment

The external environment refers to factors affecting the level of participation in the resettlement process, either directly or indirectly, originating outside the boundaries of the project. These include:

- *Political environment:* As society develops, people become more aware of and familiar with notions of democracy and fairness, and of the legal system to which they pertain. Participatory channels allow resettlers the opportunity to maximize their freedom and rights, creating further opportunities for participation. Resettlers can choose freely between different alternatives, and learn what can be achieved, over and above their individual efforts.
- *Cultural environment:* This includes the standard and quality of education, social values, attitudes and beliefs, emotions and morality. In terms of an understanding of national policies and law, and of their rights and obligations, the higher the education of a resettler, the greater his/her understanding of and ability to participate actively in resettlement.

Internal factors influencing participation

- *Social psychology:* China has over 2000 years of feudal history. The psyche that has developed within its traditional culture often appears to be incompatible with participation. Whilst a democratic society encourages members to participate and to stand up for their rights, the psyche nurtured by traditional culture is such that most people want others to speak on their behalf. Some resettlers, especially young people, sometimes have the desire to participate, but the economic costs and risks discourage them. These factors seriously hamper the achievement of widespread resettler participation.
- *Limited information:* Government is the most authoritative body in the resettlement process, with precise information about resettlement policy, compensation, land allocation and management. However, because there is no set procedure for information dissemination, resettlers are only provided with limited or unimportant information. Although they may try to understand available information, the lack of a routine channel is often discouraging, and any information that is received can be blurred and unclear.
- *Management abilities:* Resettlers' ability to raise and communicate problems clearly and effectively can lead to activist roles within organizations, while other resettlers are able to contribute practical help. Without either of these contributions the capacity of resettlers to participate is significantly curtailed.
- *Other factors:* These include wealth, occupation, experience, age, sex, nationality and religion. Because a rich family may lose more than a poor family, the former is often involved more in participatory activities. The heads of the VC and village groups, as key community leaders, assist the local government in undertaking the socio-economic survey, resettlement plan and implementation, and may therefore obtain early details and broad information on resettlement policy, socio-economic results and potential resettlement sites.

This also cements their roles as decision-makers in community affairs and resource management, and means that in terms of participation, they are among the most active stakeholders, involved in the entire resettlement process. Other stakeholders who are educated or have work experience – such as teachers, doctors, the owners of village enterprises and elders – may pay more attention to the fate of communities, families and individuals, becoming very important stakeholders in the process.

Limitations and shortcomings of participation

With an awareness of the need to protect rights, the participation of resettlers has improved. However, the overall level of participation remains low. Resettlers have participated in resettlement through a variety of means. Yet, their participation remains confined largely to solving particular problems. Lacking capacity, they don't have knowledge of effective, legitimate and low-cost means.

During planning, mistakes and omissions occurred in registration, due to resettlers' limited participation. In interviews, some resettlers complained bitterly about compensation losses caused by the design department's registration omissions. This occurred because:

- During the socio-economic investigation, the planning department failed to include every household, so mistakes and omissions occurred.
- Whilst preparing the plan, the planning department and local government failed to consult resettlers adequately.
- The planners did not participate in investigating skills training, so they lacked the ability to organize resettlers' participation.
- Resettlers were largely unaware of the benefits of participation, and remained passive.

In deciding land demolition compensation standards, resettlers and their communities did not participate adequately. Although the resettlement policy had been discussed several times in the management department, the ensuing policy only resulted in villagers being consulted in a very general way. Because there were so many resettlers in Xiaolangdi, and because they were geographically dispersed, it was difficult for both resettlers and community organizations to discuss policy formulation in depth.

During implementation, the local government's participatory capacity needs to be increased. For instance, insufficient public participation in land adjustment resulted in resettlers' dissatisfaction with land allocated, in terms of both quality and distance.

Participation in the management and use of the collective land compensation fund was ineffective. In the absence of a generalized market in land, the land used for resettler rehabilitation is organized and coordinated by the government. First, the provincial resettlement office pays compensation to the local resettlement office in the rehabilitation area, then the local resettlement office directly allocates land and pays compensation to the resettled village. Because the rehabilitation is in different cities, counties and towns, and the resettlers are often indecisive and

have varying views on their proposed destination, the final publishing of land compensation often can't be as timely as that of personal assets compensation. Additionally, some village cadres and resettlers are not familiar with compensation standards. As a result, in some villages, only a small number of cadres and resettlers' representatives decided on how compensation should be used.

The Hexi Agricultural Irrigation Project

Background[7]

The Hexi (Shule River) Agricultural Irrigation Project is located in Yumen town, Jiuquan district, Gansu Province. Initiated in 1996, the cost of this World Bank-funded project is around US$300 million. The Bank Group financed 50 per cent of the total project cost, with the remaining 50 per cent coming from central and local government. The project aims are to:

- move and resettle 96,000 peasants in the middle and southeast part of Gansu Province, in the newly developed irrigation area in Hexi Zoulang;
- improve and increase the agricultural production of Gansu Province, especially the production of grain and cash crops;
- protect and reverse environmental degradation.

The inundation of the Changma reservoir affected the involuntary resettlers of the first, second, and third villagers' groups in Shuixia village. According to the Changma reservoir resettlement action plan, most of the resettlers will be removed to Xiahui village, Huahai township, with the exception of a small number of resettlers seeking assistance from relatives and friends. The total number of involuntary resettlers in Changma reservoir amounted to 159 households (580 people), and the acquired land totalled 2582 mu.

Key stakeholders and responsibilities

Key stakeholders in the project include the resettlement and monitoring department of the Shule River management bureau, the Yumen government, the Yumen resettlement office, the Changma resettlement station, the Huahai resettlement station, and the VCs in Shuixia village and Xixia village – both created in 2000.

The resettlement department of the Shule River management bureau is in charge of the overall management and monitoring of the resettlement process. Its responsibilities include planning and financial management, information dissemination, assisting local government with sub-project examination, co-ordination, inspection of the resettlement project, and checking and accepting the project after completion. Monitoring and evaluation is also the responsibility of the bureau. The Yumen government takes full responsibility for the actual resettlement work, managing the resettlement and financing, directing, inspecting and monitoring the physical works. The Yumen resettlement office is the executive agency for the Changma reservoir resettlement. It directly organizes the movement and relocation of resettlers, organizes the village and resettlers to

implement resettlement, draws up the resettlement plan, fulfils agricultural and non-agricultural production measures, checks and registers resettlers' assets, listens to their suggestions, takes charge of the expenditure and management of the resettlement fund, and resolves problems after resettlement.

The resettlement stations in Changma and Huahai implement resettlement policy, manage the movement of resettlers, and organize them for village construction, agricultural production, and the management of communal infrastructure such as windbreaks and the development of meadow land.

The Shuixia VC cooperates with all the above organizations in implementing both the move and the rehabilitation programme. The host village committee has been in operation since May 2000, and is responsible for land allocation, the construction of the resettlement sites and the development of production.

Participation throughout the project cycle

Participatory objectives

Different stakeholders have different objectives and hopes for participatory processes. For the involuntary resettlers, the objective is to gather and master as much information as possible, so that they have time to consider their response and plan counter-measures. It is for them to know and understand compensation, and for rehabilitation policy to strive for the highest level of compensation and quality of land available.

For the resettlement village, the goal is to seek the best compensation and land package representing the best interests of the villagers, and to be up to date with the latest resettlement policy.

The township government in the inundated area is informed of the policy, so that it can cooperate with the Yumen resettlement office to organize resettlers, with the host government also assisting the same office. For the Yumen government, participation is a mechanism for dissemination of resettlement policy, to assist in the implementation of the resettlement project.

Project identification stage

Project identification is carried out by the local government and its design institute. The design institute develops and puts forward a suggested programme of action, on the basis of available technology, and consults with the local government before submitting its plans to the management agency for project identification.

The project area is located in the western region of China, geographically removed from the nearest urban centre. Local people live simple lives and the prospect of resettlement is often not believed until the project is on the doorstep. Although the design institute will have undertaken a degree of research in some villages, the participation of resettlers and affected people in this stage is basically passive, and little is heard of their rights. At this stage in the project the pattern of participation amongst villagers, resettlers and other affected people is information-based. As passive recipients, they are informed that the project is in the identification phase, and that they will be notified once this phase is complete.

Project design phase

Socio-economic survey In the socio-economic survey, the collective involvement of the community results in a level of participation that is cooperative, as all affected households are engaged. For the results of the survey to be verified, the signature of the household head is required.

BOX 8.6 THE IMPLEMENTATION OF A SOCIO-ECONOMIC SURVEY IN YUMEN

Between August and November 1994, an investigation team formed by the Gansu Institute of Hydroelectric Planning, the Yumen government, the Changma County government and resettlers' representatives conducted their socio-economic survey, the results of which were integrated into a resettlement plan. In December 1995, a clearing team made up of the resettlement department of the Shule River management bureau, the Yumen farmer committee, the Changma County government and the Shuixia VC undertook a house-by-house registration in the inundated area and devised a registration card for material assets. In December 1999, just before the move, the resettlement department of Shule River management bureau, Yumen land administration, Yumen farmer committee, Changma County government and Shuixia VC combined to form a team to recheck the index. Having a direct economic input, resettlers participated enthusiastically in the investigation.

Rehabilitation planning The Gansu Institute of Hydroelectricity and the local government initiated a consultation exercise to assist in the design of a rehabilitation plan. In the process, they listened to the opinion of the governments in both the inundated and host areas, and asked resettlers' representatives and host residents for suggestions. The community's participation in this phase was of a consultative type, with community representatives, the host government and residents working for a rehabilitation plan.

Implementation phase

Resettlement policy

The Land Administration Law and Regulations on Land Acquisition and Resettlement Regulations for the Construction of Large and Medium-sized Water Conservancy Projects formed the basis for devising compensation standards. The opinions of stakeholders were taken into account in the process. Through participation, the land compensation standard was increased to 4.6 times that of the original estimate. For resettlers, their most important asset, land, thus generated a higher level of compensation, offering more financial support for the development of production and income restoration.

Relocation areas selected

The resettlers' own choice of host area was fully respected, their level of participation in this phase exhibiting patterns of cooperation participation.

BOX 8.7 SELECTION OF A RESETTLEMENT SITE

In the original resettlement plan, involuntary resettlers were moved to Xiahui village, Huahai township. In the implementation process, the resettlers' choice was adopted, with the majority of the resettlers moved to Xiahui village and some choosing to stay in Changma township. Others went to other areas to seek help from friends and relatives. In order to obtain the opinions of the resettlers on the Xiahui village host area, in July 1998 the Shule River management bureau organized resettlers from Shuixia village to inspect the host area. Every household had a representative in the 150-strong group who made an on-the-spot investigation. With the participation of the Changma involuntary resettlers, a total of 159 households with 580 persons were removed in 2 batches. The first batch was the first group from Shuixia village. From 26–29 May 2000, 56 households (212 persons) were removed to the Xiahui village host area, while another 7 households (15 people) were relocated in a more dispersed pattern. The second batch comprised the second and the third groups from Shuixia village. By 10 December 2000, 81 households (329 people) had been removed to the Xiahui village host area. In line with the resettlers' views, 15 households (24 people) were relocated.

In 2001, after most of the resettlers had finished moving, two households who had previously chosen to rely on their families changed their minds and moved to the Xiahui village host area. The two households were both resettlers from the second group of the former Shuixia village. On 10 October 2001, they moved to the Xiahui village host area.

Compensation payment

The role of participation in compensation payment is mainly to ensure that assets compensation is paid on time. According to the results of the socio-economic survey, and to the resettlers themselves, all the necessary compensation and subsidies were provided to the resettlers. This included the house compensation fee or house price differential, production and living subsidies, livestock subsidies, transport and removal costs, medical subsidies, and relocation costs for graves. Participation in this phase was largely consultative.

Land allocation in host area

The majority of resettlers from the Changma reservoir were farmers, deriving most of their income from the land. Their primary concern thus lies in the quality and quantity of land allocation, rather than in housing stock. As a result, fairness in land allocation was a primary focus, requiring special attention in the process of public participation. In general, the allocation methods employed were transparent.

House and infrastructure reconstruction

Through participation, a series of strategies for house construction were adopted in the Changma reservoir resettlement. First, it was agreed that new homes in the host area were to be completed prior to resettlement. Second, the resettlers'

BOX 8.8 COMPENSATION

Resettlers who moved to the host area in Xiahui village, Huahai town, moved straight into new homes, constructed by the Yumen resettlement office. However, due to differences in the quantity and quality of new and old homes, a degree of compensatory balance was required. After negotiation and participation, and consideration of the burden of responsibility falling on the resettlers, the Yumen government decided to provide subsidies for the host area households, to minimize payouts by the resettlers. Based on this principle a method was established for the calculation of a compensation standard for homes.

Two distinct trends have emerged in house settlement in the host area of Xiahui Zhuang. One is that more than 50 per cent of households are claiming entitlement to the fund after settlement; the other is that households that remain have to pay the margin after settlement. In the first situation, the Yumen government has formulated a payment plan: 80 per cent of the balance was issued on 20 January 2002, and the residual 20 per cent before 30 April 2002. In the second situation, taking the poor production conditions in the host area into account, the Yumen government decided against demanding arrears in the following years until incomes had been restored.

As for the production and living allowance, the original plan was for it to be paid at the end of every year. After consultation with the resettlers, part of the allowance was paid before spring cultivation to meet the costs of the necessary production materials. The resettlers welcomed this adjustment – and it was the result of participation.

opinions on the house-building plan were discussed several times, and most of the resettlers agreed that the houses should be constructed by the government. Third, the criteria for new village construction required that there be a series of stipulations on style and appearance in the criteria. Fourth, it was agreed that the construction of houses be based on economizing costs, aiming to lessen the resettlers' burden. Participation in this phase was largely of the consultative type.

Resettlers' income restoration and development strategy

Land has been allocated, but the key problem of income restoration remains. After several years of development, production in the host area is still not comparable with that in the inundated area. Consequently, from the beginning of land acquisition, the government has been subsidizing both livelihoods and production. Allowance per unit area is basically equal to original land production. Where the land is of better quality and production is increasing, the allowance decreases each year.

Monitoring and evaluation

The National Research Centre for Resettlement was charged with the task of monitoring and evaluation, assisted by the Shugan bureau and the Yumen resettlement office. The investigation group focused mainly on the opinions of the resettlers, compensation payment, the restoration of resettlers' livelihoods, and the problems emerging in the process of resettlement. Many suggestions

were forthcoming from the resettlers, such as strengthening the resettlement office's capacity, providing compensation costs to resettlers or communities on time, and improving access to grievance appeal channels. Many of these were adopted, to the benefit of the involuntary resettlement process. Additionally, the independent monitoring activity provided a platform for stakeholders seeking to communicate and participate.

Analysis of stakeholders and their participation

Analysis of primary stakeholders

The primary stakeholders in the Changma project include the inundated village community, the resettlers of Shuixia village in Changma town, the local residents near the resettlement site of Xiahui Zhuang, and directly relevant organizations such as the Shule River management bureau, the Yumen project office and the Yumen resettlement office. Their interests, attitudes and rights within the project are shown in Table 8.1.

Table 8.1 *Analysis of primary stakeholders*

Primary stakeholders	*Interests*	*Attitude*	*Rights*
Shuixia village community	There are 9 teams in Shuixia village, of which teams 1, 2 and 3 will be directly inundated, so they have to move. For the village community, the construction of the project will bring them direct employment opportunities. Hence the community will benefit from the project	Support for the project	Substantial
Involuntary resettlers	Moving from a fertile region to the resettlement site. Despite the improved infrastructure and living conditions, the resettlers find it hard to leave their land, so they move involuntarily	Support for the project	General
Host residents	Accepting the infrastructure improvements accompanying the resettlement fund. Have a special interest in the improvement of irrigation	Passive support. Do not agree fully with the project	Few
Shule River project construction management bureau	Taking charge of construction and management. Ensuring that project goals are achieved	Project-proprietary and executive. Direct beneficiary, so it actively supports the project	Substantial

Table 8.1 *cont.*

Primary stakeholders	*Interests*	*Attitude*	*Rights*
Yumen project office	Directing and managing the project on behalf of the Yumen government. Ensuring the smooth running of the project	To plan and implement various activities of the project. It supports the project from the investors' viewpoint	Substantial
Yumen resettlement office	Subordinate to the Yumen project office, the office's specific duty is the project's implementation	Responsible for the move and the rehabilitation. It basically supports the project from the investors' viewpoint	Substantial

The participation of primary stakeholders

Shuixia village members participated in each phase of the project, as outlined earlier. The benefits of participation are:

- Participation optimized the planning scheme. While drawing up the scheme, the community's participation resulted in many useful suggestions, such as the selection of the resettlement site and a restoration plan that improved incomes.
- The extensions in the number of proposed resettlement sites enabled the resettlers to have more involvement in site choice. Resettlers could decide to move to Xiahui Zhuang, or go to a relative's village.
- Participation improved the new houses; raising the issue of house styles, resettlers' were able to influence housing design, making the new houses more desirable.
- Participation benefited the poor. Income and family size became important criteria in land allocation.
- Participation led to improvements in the provision of facilities in areas such as education and hygiene.

Analysis of secondary stakeholders

Secondary stakeholders' interests, attitude and rights in the project are listed in Table 8.2.

Interactive relations

Community and other stakeholders have different degrees of involvement, and different relations with each other. These are summarized in Figure 8.1.

Table 8.2 *Analysis of secondary stakeholders*

Secondary stakeholders	*Interests*	*Attitude*	*Rights*
Residents	Improving irrigation conditions; improving crop production; and improving income levels	Direct benefits. Most support the project	Few
Voluntary resettlers	Move from poor region to new irrigated land; opportunities to improve living and production conditions	Their direct benefit is a major project objective; the differences perceived by them before and after the move are important in gaining support for the project	Few
Gansu provincial government	Owns key construction projects; improving irrigation conditions and increasing crop production to benefit local people; after construction, the project increases fiscal revenue	Major investor and decision-maker in the project; and the direct beneficiary of construction	Substantial
Yumen government	Aims to improve irrigation conditions and increase residents' income; project achievement will promote economic development in Yumen and improve political performance of its government	One of the main investors and managers; actively supporting the the project	Substantial
Yumen water resource bureau	One of the main participants. Responsible for design and implementation	Participation in some secondary hydroelectric project construction	Few
Gansu provincial planning bureau	Implementing the project on behalf of the provincial project; strong interest in the preparatory phase	Actively supporting the project in its early phases	Substantial in the early phase; reduced during implementation
Gansu provincial fiscal bureau	Arranging the fiscal budget	Supporting the project; and hoping for profit from investment	Substantial
Gansu provincial audit bureau	Ensuring the effective use of the fund	Supporting the project with an interest in ensuring that nothing illegal is done in the course of the project	Substantial
Jiuquan land resource bureau	Playing an important role in rural land acquisition; and charging land management fee	Supporting the project with an interest in charging land-use fees	Substantial

Table 8.2 *Cont.*

Secondary stakeholders	*Interests*	*Attitude*	*Rights*
Yumen land resource bureau	An important role in rural land acquisition; and charging a land management fee	Supporting the project and hoping to charge land-use fees	Substantial
Gansu Provincial Institute of Hydroelectric Planning	Design agency; improving design; accumulating experience; and receiving design fee	Playing a leading role in deciding project scheme; supporting the project	Substantial
Supervision organization	Contract for resettlement supervision; receiving supervision fee	Taking responsibility for project resettlement supervision; supporting project construction	An important influence on project quality
Resettlement Monitoring Agency	Independent monitoring agency; hoping to improve accumulated monitoring experience	Actively participating and supporting project; providing suggestions to improve project management; and hoping to obtain economic benefit	Few
World Bank	Offering loans to the project and assisting irrigation construction	Overseeing loans for the project	Substantial

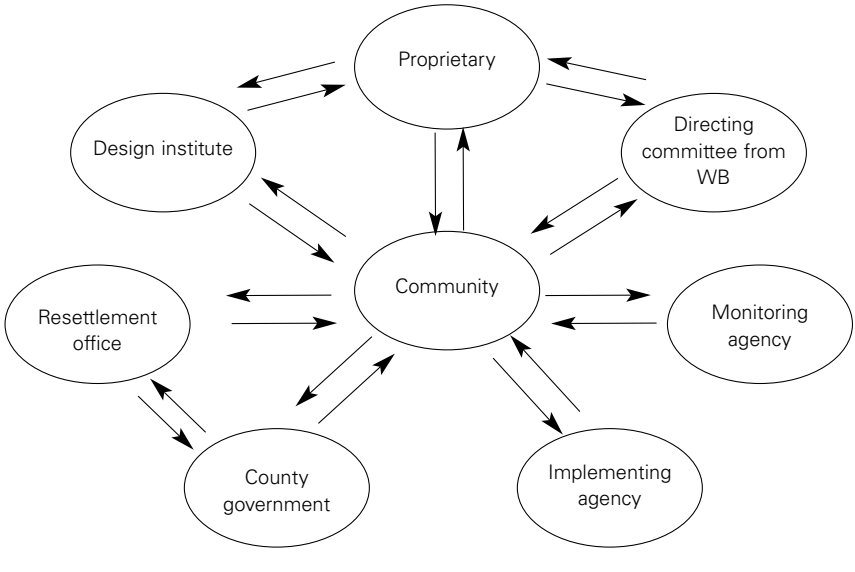


Figure 8.1 *Interactive relations in community participation*

Factors affecting community participation

The factors affecting community participation in resettlement projects concern the community, the family and its members.

Community

The community in this project refers to the village collective, its organization, and its VC. The main function of the VC is to be involved in the direction of the project, and to cooperate with county and town governments in their work. It is difficult for the committee to take initiatives. Formerly, the local government appointed village cadres, but the implementation of democratic elections has made this less common.

Family

For resettler families, their primary goals are largely similar, but some specific compensation policies will have varying effects on different family members. Thus, different families have different goals in relation to participation. Those with more members often have some advantages when participating. Furthermore, wealthy families have advantages in the participatory process.

BOX 8.9 HOUSING SUBSIDIES

Two alternatives for new housing subsidies were calculated, prior to the payment of subsidies. The first was calculated on the basis of family population, and the second by family land area. Families that had more members tended to want to adopt the first method, whereas families who owned more land wanted to adopt the second method. A decision was made in a village meeting. However, at this meeting, the larger families had more votes, and it was clear that they would benefit unfairly from participation. To address the conflict of interests, a new calculation method, taking into account both population and land area, was formulated through local government participation.

Family members

For family members, their educational qualifications and gender also affect the level and quality of their participation. Those who are educated can understand resettlement policies, and can actively participate in their drafting and revision. However, others cannot read the basic documents, and can only listen to others' explanation, let alone participate in policy discussions. Additionally, gender is also important. In Chinese tradition – particularly in the project area in northwest China – men decide most issues outside the home, whilst women make most decisions on household issues. This aspect of traditional culture is the primary factor affecting women's level of participation.

Limitations on participation in resettlement

Stakeholders' attitudes to participation

In the initial phase of survey and design, most resettlers considered that project implementation was distant. Many of them even doubted the possibility of

construction. After the project was approved, particularly after it was listed as a World Bank loan project, resettlers came to terms with the move, but they tended to adopt a passive attitude. Then, when the monitoring team intervened in the project, and the loan brought financing, the level of resettler participation also increased – yet resistance still remained to the proposed move.

Human resources

Human resource problems in participation are twofold. First, there is little technical knowledge. This lack of expertise is compounded by stakeholders being too concerned with their own missions and responsibilities. No clear decision was taken on which department would take charge of organizing and managing participatory activities. Second, participation is influenced by geographical location and traditional culture, and these factors have restricted resettler mastery and understanding of participatory activities, with a marked effect on levels of participation.

Organizational setting

Currently, no particular organization manages and organizes overall participation. Different phases of participation are organized by different departments. When organizing participation, each department often thinks about its own situation, especially when arranging participatory activities. It does things within its own scope, without thinking about their effect on the next phase. Then, knowing little about the former participatory content and effect, another organization takes charge of participatory activities in the next phase. This often results in conflict and repetition.

Capacity building

Capacity building is crucial for furthering participation in resettlement. There is an urgent need to build a sustainable functional system, including participatory capacity building for resettlers, executives and administrative agencies.

Establishing support for participation amongst resettlers

The primary aim of capacity building is to encourage resettlers to develop ways of combining the project's development with their own development, and with local social development. In this way, they can begin to participate effectively.

At present, the impetus for participation is largely external. It acts as an encourager, prompter, and incentive. It accelerates the community's organization and participation, through guidance. It is the basis for capacity building.

Establishing organizational capacity for participation

At present, no organization manages and organizes resettlers' overall participation. There is thus a need to establish:

- An independent agency that is involved in resettlement from the beginning of the project, organizing and developing participatory activities. It should cooperate closely with other functional agencies, and should be responsible for all the participatory tasks they undertake.
- A special department in each functional agency to oversee each agency's participation.

Mobilizing resources

The establishment of such organizations can assist the effective mobilization of the community's internal resources. Self-mobilization is an important preparatory phase in organizing participatory activities, accumulating experience for the further extension of organizational management.

Training for participatory skills

Assisting participants in learning how to participate is perhaps the most important issue of the whole participatory process. Common skills required include literacy, planning for family development, and community management. Particular skills are required in the areas of production, the processing and marketing of agriculture, forestry, livestock and fisheries.

The main current human resource problem is to increase people's capability to organize participation, and to create special organizers in relevant departments. A second problem area is sending these people to professional institutes to receive training, or persuading the institute to provide on-the-job training. For the training of major stakeholders, one possible way is to select educated or highly motivated resettlers to receive training, so that they can teach others how to improve participatory skills.

Capacity building during project phases

Socio-economic investigation is the basis for establishing rehabilitation planning, and the participation of primary stakeholders is crucial. In projects involving land acquisition and resettlement, the collection of data serves the following three purposes:

1 to obtain the fullest information on project impact, especially the adverse impact on the existing socio-economic situation;
2 to identify and evaluate the social resources necessary for the planned restoration and improvement of people's livelihoods;
3 to serve as the basis for the implementation of monitoring and evaluating.

During socio-economic investigation, participation in investigation, measurement, registration and data collection involves (1) the county government; (2) the design institute; (3) the resettlement office, and other related departments at county level; and (4) village representatives, resettlers and asset owners. Village team

representatives (including women) confirm collective land and assets. Resettlers and asset owners confirm their houses and assets. In this process, these organizations collect the required socio-economic data, and listen to the opinions of resettler village teams, as well as those of towns and local government, about rehabilitation schemes and sites.

Participation is crucial in establishing rehabilitation planning. Rehabilitation is often the most difficult task, since rebuilding living conditions is a challenging and complex task involving the re-establishment of the community and its lifestyle. Rehabilitation site studies and rehabilitation planning, in its different phases (feasibility study, initial design, implementation), must all meet the needs of resettlement, and avoid wasting planning funds.

The design institute, local government, resettlers and the host community should combine to choose the rehabilitation site, conduct on-the-spot investigations, compare and select schemes, and write the rehabilitation report, so that the rehabilitation plan adequately reflects resettlers' wishes, and coordinates local socio-economic development. At the same time, the town government, village team cadres and resettlers' representatives (including women) must participate in resettlement scheme decisions, rehabilitation site choice, layout and design.

After the rehabilitation plan is established and approved, it should be made available to all, especially the major stakeholders, in the form of an information booklet. The design institute and executive should also explain the main contents of this booklet to the people the plan affects.

Compensation policies and standards are based on Land Administration Law and the Regulations on Land Acquisition and Resettlement. The principle of land compensation and rehabilitation allowance is to ensure that farmers' living standards will not decline as a result of land acquisition. In the participatory process, it is important to inform resettlers of state regulations governing land compensation. It is also crucial to spend a substantial amount of time on resettlement sites, interviewing affected people (including women and vulnerable groups), to obtain information on land acquisition, house-building costs, and affected people's income and expenditure. The design institute, local government and community representatives must decide compensation standards together, in compliance with state or local regulations. Finally, compensation standards must be published, disseminated and explained at the village level.

Participation in the implementation phase

All decisions on rehabilitation should have the resettlers' full participation. The main participatory issues are to:

- understand fully the perspective of resettlers on resettlement ;
- publish each potential scheme for resettlement, after consultation with resettlers;
- ensure resettlers inspect all possible rehabilitation sites;
- adjust the final rehabilitation site according to resettlers' wishes.

House rebuilding must also take resettlers' wishes into account, with all resettlers participating fully in the rebuilding process. Measures should be adjusted to local

conditions. A process based on unified planning and self-building is appropriate, since it tries to accommodate not only the overall interests of the community, but also the wishes of resettlers. In the unified approach, a useful participatory style is to set up a building inspection panel composed of resettlers' representatives. Such a panel takes charge of housing quality, progress and funding.

Land compensation and the rehabilitation allowance should be used to restore production, to re-employ labour made redundant as a result of land acquisition, and to help those who cannot work. This fund should be used for these particular purposes, and should not be divided privately, or used for any other purpose. Resettlers also have rights to full information on compensation rates, and to be involved in all decisions on compensation use and in the management of resettlement activities. Resettlers' representatives should participate in the team responsible for monitoring and managing the compensation fund. Infrastructure project construction should devote particular attention to mobilizing local government and resettlers' activities, and to the different organizational styles and types of management in use. The community should organize resettlers to participate in such labour-intensive construction activities as land levelling, water supply, electricity supply, traffic and other infrastructure areas. Professional project reconstruction such as irrigation works, roads, railways, electrical power, shipping, telecommunication and broadcasting should choose their modes of operation, based not only on project scale and extension, but also on the views of the resettlers. Resettlers should be able to take part in construction.

Participation in the restoration of resettler's incomes

Income restoration strategies generally include two types:

1 strategies based on land, offering sufficient land to resettlers, restoring farmers' traditional production methods and sources of income;
2 non-farmer resettlement strategies, including a series of activities such as occupational training, employment arrangement, direct loans, small rural stores, and enterprises providing employment.

Income restoration schemes are crucial in the maintenance of resettler livelihoods. Under the guidance of the VC, resettlers (including women and vulnerable groups) discuss fully and decide on an appropriate scheme. First, representatives' meetings are convened to listen to resettlers' opinions of compensation. Second, experts on agriculture, forestry, and fisheries are invited to discuss the feasibility of income restoration schemes. Finally, the VC, its constituent executive committee, experts, executive members and resettlers meet together to decide on the most appropriate scheme.

Land adjustment is the most basic income restoration measure. It must be established on the basis of principles of fairness, openness and justice. The 'decide the area by production and decide the production by area' model used in the Xiaolangdi resettlement project was created by Hexi village. It is a fair method of land allocation, and a good means of enabling resettlers to participate in

community construction. The method could usefully be used in other resettlement schemes.

Technical training is an indispensable aspect of income restoration. Training design should meet resettlers' needs, especially those of women and vulnerable groups. Since rural resettlers' qualifications are generally low, technical training or guidance should try to adopt a variety of forms, such as on-the-spot demonstration, for example.

Full participation in deciding on an income restoration scheme, together with active guidance from the government, can enable a successful restoration of resettlers' livelihoods and production.

Participation in monitoring and evaluation

Monitoring and evaluation must involve participation by both the resettlers and the community. Monitoring and evaluation undertaken by the community should include asset loss investigation and results confirmation, the impact of compensation, house land allocation, house rebuilding, public facilities construction, farm land allocation adjustment, collective and family development of production, public hygiene, community affairs management, public assets and finance management. Monitoring and evaluation can be conducted by individuals, family members and informal groups (such as cooperative teams comprising representatives from several households building houses together), formal organizations (VC, village group, Party branch), and temporary organizations. Their responsibility is to monitor, inspect, evaluate, accept, consult and decide activities to the benefit of the community and its constituent organizations.

Monitoring and evaluation by an independent external organization is usually the responsibility of the project owner, and is conducted by an independent organization. It aims periodically to monitor and evaluate rehabilitation activities and income restoration, in order to direct complaints, problems and suggestions to proprietary and local executives, so that issues can be addressed as quickly as possible. External organizations should adopt participatory evaluation methods in interviewing stakeholders, and develop an extensive knowledge of the rehabilitation site, talking with resettlers, understanding local government's opinion of the resettlers' move, and the state of project construction. It must also investigate resettlers' opinions of the project, compensation payments, and the restoration of their income, production, and livelihoods. Monitoring and evaluation provide an important platform and channel for resettlers' participation and complaints.

Notes

1 Edited by John Taylor
2 Shi Guoqing and Chen Shaojun, 1999.
3 According to the Chinese land system, rural land belongs to the rural collective economic organization (namely the VC or village team). Farmer householders have some contract rights, decided on allocation. These rights are unchangeable for a fairly long period of time (30 years) apart from some areas of land acquired for state

construction. In some villages, land is sometimes subject to small adjustments (for three to five years or ten years). Often, after land allocation, women move into a household as a result of marriage. However, they can only obtain land in their new community when additional land allocation occurs.

4 In most rural regions in China, the traditional social work division is that women are responsible for internal household affairs (housework, agricultural work, caring for the old and young), and men are responsible for external affairs (discussing and deciding public affairs, heavy agricultural work, and outside contacting).

5 In Febuary 2002 the research team, led by Xu Jiajun, conducted a ten-day investigation into the reservoir resettlement. They held interviews with the Xiaolangdi resettlement bureau, the design department of the Yellow River Committee, the resettlement bureau of the Yellow River Committee, and the provincial and county resettlement offices, and visited 14 villages.

6 On the basis of an analysis of available secondary material, the team conducted interviews with various stakeholders, including the Xiaolangdi resettlement bureau, the Henan provincial resettlement office, the Shanxi provincial resettlement office, the design department of the Yellow River Committee, the North China Water Resources University (Monitoring and Evaluation Institution), the resettlement bureau of the Yellow River Committee (Supervision Institution), county level government, VCs, resettlers and resettlement site residents.

7 Zhu Wenlong, Monitoring and Evaluation Report, Changma Reservoir Involuntary Resettlement.

9

Participatory Irrigation Management: Promoting Community-based Water User Associations in the Piyuan Canal Rehabilitation Project

Li Ou, Tim Zachernuk and Han Yong

The Piyuan Canal Rehabilitation Project (PCRP) was initiated in 1998 with the aim of creating a sustainable community-based approach to irrigation management. Management reforms have involved the creation of water user associations – giving water users a primary role in the operation and maintenance of the irrigation system. This case study provides lessons for capacity building in participation in the approach known internationally as participatory irrigation management (PIM).

The Piyuan Canal is a medium-sized irrigation scheme in Huoshan County, Anhui Province. The scheme, which dates back to the 1950s, had fallen into disrepair owing to inadequate management and maintenance. By 1990 it was functioning at less than 25 per cent of its designed capacity. In 1998 the Huoshan County government sought support for rehabilitation of the canal from the Dutch government through the China–Netherlands Poverty Alleviation Project (CNPAP). After careful review the Dutch government agreed to support the rehabilitation project on the condition that a complete reform of the irrigation management structures be carried out to ensure long-term sustainable operation of the canal.

During the project there has been a consistent deepening of the reform process. At the outset the reforms were accepted as an externally imposed condition. Four years later, they are now appreciated as a necessary direction of development. This chapter describes that process, how it has been accomplished and the roles of the major players in its implementation. It is hoped that the experience of putting participatory processes into practice in the Piyuan irrigation project can provide useful guidance for similar reforms in other irrigation projects, and for the introduction of participatory practices in other sectors of activity in China.

Background to the Piyuan Canal Rehabilitation Project/CNPAP

The CNPAP is a comprehensive project that began in 1998 with the objective of enabling poor farming families in Huoshan County,[1] Anhui Province to lift themselves out of poverty in a sustainable way. The project has run from 1998 to 2003, with a Dutch contribution of US$10 million and a Chinese government contribution of US$5 million.

The CNPAP project has applied a participatory approach to project planning and implementation with an emphasis on environment and gender awareness. Its design and core components reflect the efforts of the line agencies involved to create a holistic and integrated approach to selected development interventions. It includes nine sectoral components: agriculture, forestry, water conservation, processing, rural health care, education, roads, development of community/farmers' self-help organizations, and institutional capacity building. In each sector of activities the project aim is to develop and apply effective and sustainable poverty alleviation interventions that utilize participatory approaches in a local context. Participation in the CNPAP refers not only to farmers but also to technical bureaux and to village, township and county governments. By introducing and demonstrating participation in practice, and by strengthening institutions, the project aims to ensure that participatory practices are fully integrated into the poverty alleviation and rural development work of local governments well beyond the end of the project.

One element of the CNPAP is the rehabilitation of the Piyuan Canal. The Piyuan Canal is 49km long, has an irrigated area of 4600ha and serves 82,000 farmers.[2] It has been described locally as the 'lifeline of Huoshan's population'. The canal construction began in 1959 – the Great Leap period – and continued intermittently during the subsequent drought years. Since rural reform in early 1980s the canal has never been able to irrigate the area specified in the design and in 1998 was providing effective irrigation for only 1000ha. This is a result of low design standards, poor construction quality and, especially, the lack of operation and maintenance (O&M) mechanisms for branch canals and below. Moreover, because of the limited supply of water and poor management, a vicious circle had been created – as the water user needs were not being satisfied, they were reluctant to pay fees, and the county water bureau was then without the financial resources to undertake the basic maintenance and upgrading of the system required to deliver improved services.

During the design phase of the CNPAP the Huoshan County government applied for CNPAP assistance to rehabilitate the Piyuan Canal irrigation system. As a poverty alleviation project, the CNPAP concentrates most of its activities in nine poor townships in the western mountainous area of the county, and the Dutch government did not prioritize the canal project in the low-lying northern part of the county. The county government put a very high priority on the canal, however, and agreement was reached to include the PCRP within CNPAP with a budget of RMB15 million for rehabilitation engineering, funded on a 1:1 matching basis with contributions from both Dutch and Chinese funds. The Dutch government also insisted, as a precondition for such support, that irrigation

management structures and systems be reformed to ensure sustainable operation of the irrigation system. Based on experience elsewhere it was felt that water users must be actively involved in irrigation management, and that this could best be achieved with the introduction of water user associations (WUAs). As a result, since 1999 the physical rehabilitation of the canal has been carried out in parallel with management reforms.

The long-term objective has been to ensure sustainable irrigation management, in organizational, institutional and financial terms. This is to be achieved through having fully functional WUAs responsible for operating, maintaining and upgrading branch canals, and for collecting water fees. Financial sustainability is also achieved through an independent Piyuan Canal Management Authority selling water to the associations on a volumetric basis.

The development of WUAs in the PCRP has already experienced two phases and is currently in its third. The three phases can be seen as a deepening of the process of change over time, with a growing commitment to and understanding of PIM practices on the part of all parties concerned. The main feature and focus of the three phases were:

1999–2000: Establishment of WUAs and their participation in irrigation management. Initially this was a 'top-down' administrative process, through the county water conservation bureau and the township governments and administrative villages concerned;

2001: Empowerment of WUAs with the rights of speaking, analysing, decision-making and management of irrigation systems, and promotion of overall participation. This was undertaken using participatory action research (PAR) approaches to institutional/community development;

2002: Consolidation of WUAs locally through the establishment of community-level water user groups (WUGs).

The overall CNPAP strategy provides for a high degree of flexibility to allow processes and approaches to be adjusted to account for problems encountered and lessons learned at each stage. This strategy has been an important part of the process of institutional change in the PCRP. The application of the PAR approach to community participation contributed significantly to such changes and processes.

This chapter introduces the PCRP/CNPAP. The first section examines the operational context of the water sector. There follows a discussion of the key aspects of participation, the key stakeholders and the process of establishing the participatory initiative, together with the institutionalization of participatory processes. Wider lessons and conclusions are then drawn.

The Operational Context of the Water Sector

After the rural reforms started in the late 1970s and the early 1980s, farmers in China gradually became the independent users of natural resources and decision-

makers in their own enterprises. Following this initial empowerment, the farmers in some areas started to demand political rights for the election of the village leaders. A practice of *Hai Xuan* (election without a pre-selected list of candidates nominated by the township government or village Party branch) had been developed by the farmers in Jilin Province. Following evaluation by the central authorities, it was further developed into the Organic Law on Village Committees, approved and issued for testing by the National People's Congress in 1988. After ten years of testing and several rounds of election (once every three years) the law was revised and officially enacted by the Congress. Implementation started in November 1998. The autonomous nature of VCs and the implementation of the Four Democracies (of election, decision-making, management and supervision) at the community level were clearly defined by the Law.

Democratic development in rural areas, promoted by the central authorities, has been guided by this Law. Regulations protecting farmers' rights of independent management have also lightened the burden of levies and fees, and have provided a favourable political context for requesting the local government to improve delivery of services to farmers and promote community participation.

The influence of international donor projects

Since the early 1990s in China, there have also been an increasing number of international donor-funded projects dealing with poverty alleviation, resource management and related objectives. These have promoted the use of community participation and the application of participatory approaches within the project cycle. The Chinese counterpart government agencies such as the Ministries of Agriculture and Forestry made a commitment to these approaches, and requested local governments and line agencies to allow participatory elements to be planned and implemented in international projects.

Despite this, the administrative and revenue structure of local government continues to hinder the improvement of service delivery and the promotion of community participation, while incentives and vehicles for participation by local government are still inadequate. This is the context that created the opportunity for the CNPAP project to play a major role in promoting community participation in poverty alleviation, resource management and infrastructure improvement (eg, irrigation management) and in strengthening the enabling environment. It was because of the project that the county government and relevant line agencies accepted the donor's proposal on irrigation management reform and the development of WUAs, as illustrated in the following pages.

Promoting a cost-recovery approach in the water sector

At a national level, it has been recognized that the existing management system of the large and medium-sized irrigation districts can no longer meet the demand for the development – and the O&M – of irrigation systems. Economic or financial problems are among the reasons for this. Despite significant government investment in irrigation infrastructure, the funds available were still inadequate to meet the vast needs of the country. As a result, standards of design

have been low and the quality of construction poor, especially in projects constructed between the 1950s and the 1970s. In addition there were inadequate resources available for O&M, and the systems have deteriorated over time, with water-use efficiency falling to as little as 30 to 50 per cent.

For a long time irrigation water had also been provided free of charge to farmers under the centrally planned economy. The government had been responsible, not only for the initial investment, but also for the O&M of the systems through line agencies. It was called 'the state pays the irrigation and farmers cultivate the land'. In 1985 the State Council issued regulations detailing ways of determining, collecting and managing water fees for water conservation infrastructure. The water fees charged were still inadequate, however, to cover the full cost of O&M, and the systems still depended heavily on government subsidies.

When implemented, water fees were collected by VCs and township governments. The income was often put into the general revenue fund and diverted to other uses, however, and it was frequently the case that only a very small proportion of the fees collected was remitted to the water conservation bureaux. As a result these bodies lacked sufficient finances to undertake basic O&M, let alone upgrading of the irrigation systems. On the farmers' side, they were reluctant to pay water fees because the irrigation agencies were failing to supply them with sufficient water when it was required. So the irrigation management systems have been entrenched in a vicious circle of poor service delivery and weak finances.

The efforts to develop self-financing irrigation and drainage districts (SIDDs) by the water conservation line agencies, with World Bank assistance, aimed partially at solving the problems of economic deficit and the diversion by local governments of water fees to other uses. World Bank documents describe the SIDD concept as follows:[3]

> *'SIDDs comprise water user associations (WUAs) established by farmers to operate and maintain the lower levels of the irrigation systems, and water supply corporations (WSCs) which operate and maintain the main canal systems and diversion works and sell water to WUAs on a volumetric basis. Each WUA elects its own leaders from its farmer-members, and takes responsibility for planning and supervision of the water allocation, maintenance and repairs of the irrigation channels, and fee collection. Each WSC is an independent company established under the Company Law with a Board of Directors which includes farmer WUA representation, usually accounting for 40 per cent to 50 per cent of the members. The SIDD reforms increase the role and responsibility of farmers in managing their irrigation affairs, while reducing the burden and role of government in irrigation management and financing.'*

PIM is described by its practitioners as an approach that:

> *covers a variety of different ways in which water users can be involved in the planning, construction, operation and maintenance of irrigation systems. Participation ranges from being informed and able to express views to situations where users and their representatives jointly or solely hold authority to govern irrigation systems and determine the irrigation services to be provided.*[4]

The concepts of SIDD and PIM overlap to a large extent, with the definition of SIDD being more rigorous and including the nature of the relationship between water supplier and water users. The actual extent of participation of farmers may vary greatly in the practical implementation of either concept.

Institutional issues

In addition to the economic problems, there are also institutional problems within the irrigation management systems. After the disintegration of the commune system, there has been no management organization at the community level for the O&M of the branch canals and below. Awareness of the problem at the national level has led to a process of change to address these financial and institutional problems of local water management.

Since 1995, on the recommendation of and with the assistance of the World Bank, pilot projects have been started to promote PIM in the self-financing districts. The Ministry of Water Resources has come to recognize the value of water users' participation in irrigation management for the effective and sustainable O&M of irrigation systems. In various policy documents of the Ministry and its line agencies, the organization and development of WUAs have been advocated.

The O&M of the irrigation system has also been affected by policies intended to lighten the burden on farmers. In the past, canal maintenance, and in particular desilting, was largely undertaken using compulsory labour. Each labourer in a rural family was required to provide between 10 and 15 days of labour per year on public projects. A part of this was often used for maintenance of the irrigation system, especially for the branch canal and below. As a result of the tax and fee reform piloted in Anhui Province in 2000, however, this labour requirement has been abolished. Now the labour requirements for the O&M activities on irrigation systems and roads have to be discussed and agreed upon within the communities following the procedures known as 'each event needs a special discussion'. As a result local government is no longer able simply to use compulsory labour for the O&M of irrigation systems, and must work in a more participatory manner.

The development of PIM and WUAs has two main institutional dimensions – the water management line agency (with sectoral specialization in water management) and the local government administration.

There are several branches within the water conservation line agency, such as water conservation, planning, engineering construction and water management. In the case of Huoshan County, until 1999 the management of the Piyuan Canal was the responsibility of the Huoshan County water conservation bureau, and directly managed by the bureau's Piyuan Canal management station. Following the irrigation management reforms, the station was elevated to bureau status as Piyuan Canal management bureau (PCMB). Although it is still supervised by the county's water conservation bureau, the PCMB is now responsible for its own revenues and costs, independently of the water bureau budget. Despite this independence, the relationship with the water conservation bureau is close and both the county government and the bureau can exert either positive or negative influences on the PCMB within irrigation management reform.

As for local government administration, the county government makes the decisions on the overall development planning of water conservation and related policies, usually prepared and proposed by the bureau. There is a deputy magistrate responsible for water conservation affairs. The township government is responsible for managing the maintenance of branch canals and below, as well as for the collection of water fees through the VC.

Under the irrigation management reform, WUAs are responsible for the operation, maintenance and upgrading of branch canals and for the collection of water fees. However, these associations are completely new organizations without institutional foundations. Most WUA executives are also VC leaders. In their capacity as village officials they are responsible for tasks assigned by the township government, such as the collection of taxes, family planning, etc. Moreover, their performance of these responsibilities is closely related to their bonus payments from the township government. At the same time there is a general culture of receiving and fulfilling instructions from higher levels of government, and no familiarity with the independent leadership that is possible within WUAs. Therefore, the reform process still needs the strong support of county and township governments to foster an enabling environment.

Overall, the administrative and revenue structure of local government hinders the improvement of service delivery and the promotion of community participation. Local government lacks sufficient incentives and vehicles for participation. Therefore, the CNPAP project has had to play a major role in promoting community participation in poverty alleviation, resource management and infrastructure improvement. This has included irrigation management and generally strengthening the enabling environment. The CNPAP was responsible for the county government and relevant line agency accepting the donor's request for irrigation management reform and the development of WUAs.

The legislative context

Besides the regulations imposing water charges and policies to advocate the development of PIM and WUAs, the recently passed Water Law provides a legislative framework for irrigation management reform. Although the Law is concerned with macro-level issues, there are a number of articles closely related to the rights and obligations of agricultural water users that hold implications for the development of PIM and WUAs at community level.

The Law, and the Anhui provincial regulations, stipulate that fees collected from users should be used solely for the management and maintenance of the irrigation infrastructure and should not be considered part of general government revenues. At the same time the Law and regulations have also stipulated that water fees should be charged by volume of water used rather than area of land irrigated. This provides local-level water management authorities with a dilemma in that the physical infrastructure necessary for measuring water use does not yet exist. It also provides PIM and WUAs with the challenge of allocating the fees charged by the management authorities on a volumetric basis to WUGs and water users on an acreage base. This is because it is not possible to install measuring devices for each user, given the large number of users.

In the case of the PCRP project, in order to promote community participation and irrigation management reform, the county government has been active in creating an enabling legislative environment. Besides the establishment of the leading group at county level, the county government has also approved the scheme of irrigation management reform and enacted corresponding regulations. It has also publicized the regulations and the importance of the reform on local television and in newspapers.

The poverty context

Although Huoshan County is a nationally designated poverty county, the townships covered by the the Piyuan Canal irrigation system are generally recognized as comparatively better off parts of the county and are not involved in most CNPAP activities. But the highly variable rainfall patterns in this mountain area, where only 8 of the past 22 years have been characterized as normal, leave farmers in the area very vulnerable to drought. In addition, the Piyuan Canal irrigated area is the major grain producing area in the county, and a serious crop failure can have repercussions on food security for other parts of the county.

Moreover, there is still comparative poverty and income disparity in the area. The communities located on the lower reaches of Piyuan Canal or its branch canals are often poorer than the ones located on the upper reaches. Farm households relying mainly on irrigated crop production for subsistence agriculture are often poorer than those with diversified farming systems and involvement in off-farm activities such as businesses or migrating in search of waged labour. Therefore, any reduction in the cost of irrigation, resulting from the development of PIM and WUAs, will have a more positive impact on the poorer communities and farm households than upon other households.

Key Aspects of Participation

Objectives

As mentioned in the introduction, the focus on reform of the irrigation management systems and on the use of WUAs was mainly championed by the CNPAP project and its donor, the Dutch government. The latter has rich experience of developing WUAs for irrigation management nationally and internationally, and was aware of the thousands of irrigation systems in China with engineering and management problems similar to Piyuan Canal's. The CNPAP's adoption of a participatory approach in the PCRP project was therefore intended to provide a model for improved irrigation management in China. Its long-term objective was to establish a financially sustainable management system based on:

- fully functioning WUAs responsible for upgrading, operating and maintaining branch canals as well as for the collection of water fees; and
- an independent Piyuan Canal management authority selling water to the associations on a volumetric basis.

It should be stressed that while a fully functioning participatory management structure was identified as a project goal based on Dutch experience, there was no detailed schedule or blueprint prepared as to how the goal should be achieved. This was in accordance with the overall CNPAP strategy of localizing international practice and approaches in accordance with prevailing conditions and also in keeping with the inclusive nature of participation in CNPAP, whereby local government agencies are full partners in the process of change.

At the outset the Chinese counterparts – the county government and water conservation bureau – accepted the pre-conditions requested by the donor so as to obtain financial assistance for the physical rehabilitation of the canal. Thus the objectives of water management reform and farmers' participation were accepted only passively at the start. However, through practice they have gradually become aware of the importance of participatory approaches in irrigation management resulting from the development of WUAs, especially as a key aspect of institutional reform and community participation. At the present time they now genuinely share the original project objective of adopting a participatory approach for irrigation management.

The nature, extent and forms of participation throughout the project cycle

The engineering elements of the PCRP have been implemented through an iterative annual cycle involving planning and design of construction works, usually undertaken from June to September; the construction season, October to March of the following year; and the auditing, checking and acceptance of construction works, done in April and May. The end of each construction season coincides with the beginning of the irrigation season, when works are commissioned and put into use. The first such cycle took place in 1999–2000, and the 2002–3 construction year was the fourth and final iteration of the cycle with CNPAP support.

While there was an overall construction plan for the rehabilitation at the outset, only the works for the first cycle were designed in detail, leaving a certain degree of flexibility to adjust plans in subsequent years. This flexibility has proved important for adjusting the schedule of works undertaken in response to the needs of the WUAs as they became clear during the process.

Throughout these cycles of planning, construction and commissioning, the reform of management procedures has been an ongoing process. With each year of experience new lessons have been learned and experience gained in ensuring that WUAs play an effective role in the management of the irrigation system. This has been reflected in a deepening of the process of reform over the course of time as the various stakeholders acquired a better understanding of the reform process and management requirements.

While the construction activities have gone through four cycles, the reform process can be described as having taken place in three phases. These, and the changing nature of participation, are illustrated in Table 9.1.

Table 9.1 *The changing nature of participation throughout the project*

Phase	*1999–2000*	*2001*	*2002*
Focus of project	Establishment of WUAs; constitutions/ regulations for operation set up	Real participation of water users, especially WUA leaders	Consolidation of WUA development and activities at WUG level
Means	Top-down; administrative; study tours to World Bank projects	Application of participatory action research to localize PIM concepts; awareness raising and empowerment of WUAs with four distinct rights in whole process	Adjustments to WUAs from bottom-up by free election
Types of participation	Notification; implementation on the advice of outsiders/senior levels	Cooperative and autonomous respectively for relevant activities	Cooperative and autonomous
Achievement	Established enabling environment; The first WUA was established by the end of 1999; the first five by 2000	WUA leaders participated in entire process; additional improvement of enabling environment; recognized irrigation area 10,000–29,000 mu; water fee 384,000 yuan (five-year total); 30,000 yuan for maintenance (historical break); adapted own regulations	Qualification rate of construction raised from 20% in second phase of construction to 86%; water fee collected directly by WUA through WUGs and reached 90% of the total by the end of June; water users start to consider WUA as their own; PCMB improved service delivery
Problem	WUA leaders worked passively and initially diverted water fees to local government as tax and levies; water users consider WUAs to be profit-based water 'dealers'.	Fee collection reliant on village leaders; too significant a proportion of returned fees was spent on personnel payments; continuing lack of awareness of own roles; WUGs not functioning in practice	Overlap of roles with WUA leaders or poor performance of a few promoters; deepening activities to WUG level has not been done as well as expected
Causes	Leaders have no awareness of their own roles; lack of capacity building	Dual roles of leaders (being simultaneously village leaders); WUAs have too many executive members; insufficient pilot fieldwork conducted	Terms of reference of the promoters had not been adapted to actual needs and the situation; lack of field-work
Lessons learned	WUAs could not be established without genuine participation of the members in the entire reform process	In-depth fieldwork and promoters are needed; WUAs need to be consolidated at grass-roots level	Attitudes and behaviour could not be spontaneously changed
Counter-measures	Participatory community development expert recruited; participatory action resarch applied and the core team formed	One promoter recruited for each WUA; deepen WUA development at WUG level	Training needs assessment and updated job description; training or refresher course; participatory action research fieldwork in pilot WUGs

Participation in Phase 1

Project identification

At the outset the rehabilitation of the canal was given high priority by the county and township governments and the water conservation bureau. This priority reflected the needs of farmers in the middle and lower reaches of the canal, who did not have assured access to an adequate amount of water for irrigation in years with normal or less than normal rainfall. At the outset the problem was seen simply as an engineering task to be solved by an adequate amount of investment in construction.

The need to simultaneously address water management reforms was identified as an issue by Dutch advisers and became a pre-condition for supporting the infrastructure rehabilitation. The Chinese counterparts did not attach high priority to management reforms, but agreed to undertake the reforms to ensure that support for the engineering work would be forthcoming. The views of farmers on the need for management reforms were not actively sought out because it was assumed that farmers would cooperate in any project that would ensure them reliable, adequate and timely access to water.

Project planning and design

The initial plans for rehabilitation involved repairs, widening and seepage prevention on the main canal, and extending the network of branch canals along the lines of engineering plans prepared years earlier by the water conservation bureau. Initially the designs were made from an engineering perspective, with no input sought or received from farmers.

There was a difference of opinion between the local water engineers and the international advisers regarding the strategies to be followed. The local engineers preferred to see the bulk of work done on the main canal, and to complete rehabilitation of the main canal before starting work on the secondary infrastructure. The international advisers emphasized extending the branch canals and expanding the irrigated area as widely as possible, and starting work on the secondary system earlier rather than later, with the aim of maximizing both the utility to farmers and, as a result, the water revenues of the bureau.

Specialists from the Pishihang irrigation district (a large irrigation system crossing several prefectures/municipalities in Anhui Province) prepared the first detailed proposals for management reform, based on their experience of the administrative processes used to establish WUAs. The consultants recommended the establishment of seven WUAs along the canal, generally coinciding with the administrative boundaries of townships. Two strategies were proposed for establishing the WUAs. The first, to establish one pilot WUA initially, learn from the experience, and then establish subsequent associations in accordance with the progress of the rehabilitation work along the length of the canal. The second strategy proposed was to establish all seven associations simultaneously. After lengthy discussions the first strategy was adopted, and hindsight shows it was the better choice.

The plans for construction and management reform were reviewed by the international water specialist and approved by the CNPAP project.

Project management

During Phase 1 of the PCRP project in 1999–2000, project management was mainly concerned with engineering (planning, design and construction) and finance. There were two levels of management. The CNPAP project supervised the PCRP project headquarters and the headquarters undertook the direct management of the physical construction and the process of management reform.

To exercise its supervisory functions, the CNPAP project office devised procedures for project planning, construction, finance, and appraisal/approval of engineering works. These functions were mainly undertaken by a senior local water conservation engineer hired as a project field officer. The annual plans for construction, the budget and the detailed designs were submitted by the headquarters to the CNPAP project for discussion and approval, and relevant agreements were subsequently signed by the two parties.

During engineering and construction the CNPAP project contracted an independent organization for inspection and quality control. The project's regulations also stipulated that WUAs participate in the inspection and approval of the construction works; however, as the first WUA was only established part way through the first engineering cycle, there was no structured mechanism for community participation in project management during this phase. As a result this stipulation was not put into practice during the first phase of construction.

Project construction

The rehabilitation work on the main canals, pumping stations, branch canals and devices such as check gates was done by construction companies through a contract tendering process managed by the project implementation headquarters. In some instances the communities contributed labour for the earthworks involved in land preparation. The amount of labour used was within the requirement of the annual quota for compulsory labour days. Some farmers had land expropriated for the construction of branch canals. The communities extended compensation to farm households affected by the expropriations through adjustment and reallocation of land holdings.

As is usual practice, the organization of labour inputs and adjustment of the arable land were undertaken by the concerned townships and administrative villages. The role of the village leaders was simply to complete the tasks assigned. They were not encouraged to promote participation and discussion during decision-making, and in the first phase the WUAs had little involvement in this respect.

Project financing

Financing of the entire PCRP is provided by matching contributions of CNPAP and various levels of the Chinese government. Except for the labour contribution

described above, the communities and water users were not expected to pay towards construction costs. There was no participation expected for financing project construction; however, over the longer term, maintenance and operating costs are to be covered by water fees. In the 2000 irrigation season the first WUA was involved in the collection of water fees within its boundaries. However the head of the association was simultaneously the leader of one of the villages in the area, and the old practice of transferring part of the water fee to the village general revenues recurred.

Achievements and challenges of Phase 1

The quality of engineering and construction work was quite good in the first construction season – the winter of 1999 and spring of 2000 – largely because the construction activity was primarily concentrated on the main canal and was relatively easy to inspect and supervise. However, inspection and quality control were not satisfactory during the second construction season, when the works were spread across a large number of sub-projects on scattered branch canals. These problems together with those of implementation and construction led to poor quality in the engineering works of the second season – the winter of 2000 and spring of 2001. The qualification rate during the preliminary acceptance checking was less than 20 per cent.

Management reforms

In terms of water management reform, the focus of the PCRP project in the first phase was to form the first WUA as a pilot and establish the ground rules governing its operation. Among the major measures taken in this phase was the establishment of an enabling environment. This included:

- approval of the scheme of irrigation management reform by county government;
- establishment of the 'leading group' for decision-making and coordination, together with the headquarters for the implementation of physical construction;
- promotion of the irrigation management station to bureau status, making it the main organization responsible for the reform programme;
- public awareness measures to promote the scheme and the importance of the reform.

This phase was also marked by field trips for key persons concerned with the irrigation management reform to World Bank-assisted projects in the provinces of Jiangsu, Hebei and Hunan to learn from other experiences in organizing WUAs. The first WUA was established as a pilot, supported by the associated formulation and implementation of regulations. Based on this, four more WUAs had been established at the end of 2000.

The formation of the first pilot WUA was carried out by the PCMB midway through the first construction season. A lack of experience in management

reform, as well as the perception of the PCMB that management reforms were simply being carried out to satisfy a condition imposed by the donor, resulted in a rapid and perfunctory formation process for the association. A limited number of public awareness activities were initiated, and meetings were held in each village, at which representatives were elected. These representatives met to elect a management board for the WUA and a charter, which was largely prepared by the PCMB, was adopted. The whole process was completed within two weeks.

Internal and external evaluations of the project were undertaken at the end of Phase 1. In these reviews, the following problems were found:

- The WUA leaders lacked awareness of their roles and duties, and carried out their work passively. In the pilot WUA, the water users had paid water fees but the leaders diverted the fees to the general revenues of the township government. The WUA executive were also village leaders at the same time, and their performance in tax and levy collection was closely related to their bonus payments by the township government.
- Although efforts had been made to publicize the irrigation management reform and WUA issues, water users did not consider the association to be their own organization. Some even thought of it as a profit-based organization established by the water 'dealers'.

Analysis of the causes and implications of these problems highlighted the following points:

- The project implementation line agency – the PCMB – sought to establish WUAs in a manner that could be characterized as 'top-down', involving the county water conservation bureau, the relevant township governments and the administrative villages in a process that was primarily administrative. Such an approach had been applied in the World Bank projects that had been visited, but did not prove replicable. The reasons will be illustrated in a later section.
- There was insufficient awareness raising and capacity building of WUA leaders and water users. Moreover, the election of WUA executives and the formulation of the WUA constitution and regulations were done in a superficial and formalistic manner.
- It was not possible to establish and develop effective and fully functioning WUAs without the genuine participation of water users and the executive members in the entire process of irrigation management reform. In addition to the engineers of PCMB, rural sociologists or community development professionals were needed for the effective establishment of WUAs.

The project implementation headquarters was managed and primarily staffed by the county water conservation bureau. The construction works were contracted out to construction companies and managed by the headquarters. It was stipulated that the contracting be made through public tender processes. However, this was not done with sufficient transparency.

At the end of 2000, based on the experience gained with the first WUA and in accordance with the progress of the construction schedule, four more WUAs

were established along the middle reaches of the canal. The PCMB continued to play the lead role in the establishment of the associations. However, a growing appreciation of the difficulty involved in, and the importance attached to, the role of WUAs was seen in the fact that the process of establishing the associations was spread over a period of two months. During this time much more effort was put into raising public awareness and gaining the understanding and support of county and township authorities. Nevertheless, the construction plans for the second year of engineering works were made several months before the establishment of these associations, and neither the associations nor water users had any input into the plans. As a result of the top-down approach and for the many reasons cited above, the nature and extent of community participation in the first phase of the PCRP project was very limited.

Participation in Phase 2

Following the experiences in the first construction season it was recognized that more time and effort needed to be devoted to supporting the process of management reforms. In August 2000 a local field officer was hired to manage the process of reform. The individual was a retired township Party secretary, with experience in management and community work, rather than someone with an engineering background.

It was also recognized that the township level of government had to be brought more fully into play if the reforms were to be implemented effectively. In each of the relevant townships, therefore, a 'leading group' was established to support the process of reform and to organize, coordinate or support WUA activities such as surveying the irrigated area and fee collection. The leading groups comprised the township leader responsible for irrigation matters and representatives from various township offices involved in water-related activities, such as the agriculture and tax bureaux.

In March 2001 the project also recruited a community development expert from the Centre for Integrated Agricultural Development (CIAD)/China Agricultural University. With his support in early 2001 the project began applying PAR approaches to community participation. These are described in Box 9.1.

Project planning and design

The WUAs played an important role in identifying and selecting improvements to be made on the secondary infrastructure for the third year of construction activities. WUA representatives suggested and prioritized improvements to be made to the secondary irrigation system in their areas. The design office of the water conservation department made preliminary budgets for the identified projects. The list of projects and the estimated costs were reviewed by the PCMB and the CNPAP in the light of the budget available and the overall development strategy, and a shortlist of projects was determined for the construction season, for which detailed design and budgeting work were then done. These projects formed the core of the construction activities on secondary infrastructure in the third year of construction.

BOX 9.1 THE APPLICATION OF PARTICIPATORY ACTION RESEARCH IN PHASES 2 AND 3

The approach followed during phases 2 and 3 utilized mutual learning processes amongst stakeholders, especially water users. The concepts and methodologies of PIM were introduced to WUAs, using case and pilot studies at association and community levels. This involved extensive communication, dialogue and negotiation. Using participatory methodologies, the PIM approach was adapted to meet local circumstances. This informed the day-to-day O&M of irrigation systems. The experience of the WUAs was also disseminated so as to promote the general development of the associations and the sub-organizations.

The process started with case studies in the selected representative WUAs. Differences in irrigation, in terms of gravitational irrigation or pumping, and other socio-economic factors were taken into account for the selection of case studies. Workshops and group discussions were conducted to facilitate the water users and suppliers to:

- identify stakeholders, together with possible positive or negative influences and responses;
- analyse problems, causes and solutions in the O&M of irrigation;
- recognize the need for reform of irrigation management.

At the same time, the concepts of PIM were adapted to the local circumstances and context.

The localized concepts of PIM on 'What it is', 'Why' and 'How' were presented at the workshops in each of the WUAs. Water users' representatives participated in these workshops. Their specific irrigation management problems and solutions were analysed, and the action plans were formulated accordingly. In this way, the awareness of the associations' leaders and representatives of the need for WUA development was strengthened. They started to develop ownership of and commitment to WUAs. Thus a change from the 'top-down' approach applied in the first phase of PCRP was initiated.

Similar presentations were made to relevant leaders of the government and line agency, especially at the township level, in Piyuan Canal project areas. Their awareness of the need for PIM was raised, and the enabling environment was further strengthened.

An approach that is process-focused and action-oriented has been applied iteratively in each stage of the development and operation of the WUAs. Thus, for example, at the beginning of the irrigation season in early April 2001 monitoring of the quality of engineering works constructed in the winter of 2000 and the spring of 2001 was undertaken. This included a review of the planning for the construction and maintenance programme for the next season, checking of irrigation type (gravitational or pumping) and acreage, etc.

Project management and supervision

Direct contracting and management of the construction process was once again handled by the PCMB. There was active participation of WUA leaders and water users' representatives in the overall processes of organizing and implementing counterpart earthworks, water distribution plans, fee collection and maintenance activities on the secondary and tertiary system.

Although project procedures in the first phase stipulated that WUAs were to participate in the monitoring of construction activities, it was often found that construction companies would ignore the WUA representatives and resolve issues directly with PCMB staff. In the second phase the role of WUAs was strengthened by insisting that they participate in the acceptance checking of the completed project, and that their signature be required on the final acceptance report. As a result the construction companies attached far more importance to the comments and views of the WUAs.[5]

Prior to the start of the third year of construction, the PCMB also provided a two-day technical training course for representatives of the WUAs, covering basic construction techniques and standards as well as construction management procedures. This enabled them to play a more knowledgeable and therefore more effective role in construction supervision.

The importance of the participation of WUAs in monitoring was highlighted by the fact that construction activities in the third construction season were scattered over a large area. The limited manpower of both the PCMB and the contracted supervising engineers made it impossible for them to pay close and detailed attention to all the work. The WUAs had sufficient resources plus the incentive to monitor the work in their respective areas. As a result, many issues related to the quality of construction were identified and rectified.

Project finance

The WUAs collected water fees from farmers in the 2001 irrigation year with less resistance than the previous year, although some fees were not collected until the end of the year. The fees were remitted to the PCMB in full, and the PCMB then returned a predetermined percentage of the fees to the associations. The formula for returning fees to the associations provided an incentive for early collection of fees, with the WUAs getting a larger portion of fees collected before July. Nevertheless the fees collected were still less than adequate to cover the operation of the WUAs and pay for ongoing maintenance.

Achievements and challenges in Phase 2

Having applied participatory approaches and methodologies, the following improvements were achieved in the second phase:

- Through measurement of the irrigated area, the area of fee collection accepted by water users increased from 700 to 1900ha.
- Fee collection reached 384,000 yuan, equal to the total revenue collected over the previous five years, and WUAs used 30,000 yuan from returned fees for maintenance of branch canals. This was the first time in 20 years that this had been achieved.
- Experience gained through project implementation enabled WUAs to further improve their regulations relating to irrigation management. In particular it was recognized that a level of management below that of the association was needed, and that WUGs were necessary, corresponding to branch canals at the secondary level.

Although great progress was achieved in Phase 2, some problems remained:

- WUAs relied heavily on the village leaders for fee collection. As a result, most of the revenue from fees was used to pay salaries, especially to people outside the WUA. This had the effect of reducing the enthusiasm of WUA staff and meant that little money was available for maintenance.
- WUA leaders continue to be village leaders, and most of these have not yet fully understood or differentiated their roles and responsibilities.
- The WUGs were established in name only, and had not genuinely become involved in planning, management, implementation and supervision.

The third cycle of construction work, corresponding roughly to the second phase of the management reforms, involved clearing and strengthening a series of tunnels bringing water to the lowest third of the irrigated area, where WUA numbers six and seven were planned. In line with the strategy of establishing the associations according to the progress of the rehabilitation work, the last two associations were set up towards the end of 2001. Based on earlier experience, a much more considered approach was taken to the establishment process. The PCMB took the lead role in the process, but relied heavily on the active involvement of township governments. A preparatory stage of almost three months preceded the formal establishment of the association. This was in marked contrast to the perfunctory procedures followed in the case of the pilot WUA in the first year of the project, and serves to demonstrate further the better understanding gained through experience of the problems and issues involved in the reform process.

Participation in Phase 3

A participatory assessment and a workshop undertaken at the end of the second phase led to the recognition that the project would fail if it continued to depend largely on the activities of a limited number of experts, leaders and project officials. Staffing at grass-roots level needed to be strengthened and genuine grass-roots organizations established. As a result, counter-measures taken in the third phase were as follows:

- One promoter was recruited to support the work of each WUA. The promoters are paid by the CNPAP and work under the direction of the project officer for water management reform. These individuals are generally community-spirited, retired township and village leaders. Subsequent activities and achievements have served to support the importance of this measure.
- To underline the separation of the WUAs and the PCMB, and the perceptions of that separation, the CNPAP water management field officer moved his working location from the PCMB to the CNPAP premises.
- A process of institutional adjustment in the WUAs began in February 2002 whereby the WUGs were carefully divided on the basis of branch canals; water users elected group heads and members (two to three for each WUG).

BOX 9.2 THE ITERATIVE APPLICATION OF A PAR APPROACH FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF EACH WUA

At the beginning of each stage, case studies were made of representative WUAs. The particular situation, problems and causes applicable to the stage were analysed in group discussions facilitated by a moderator – the community development expert of the project. Solutions and actions were identified, together with good experiences and feasible options in organizational management and the O&M of the irrigation system.

At the appropriate time, workshops were held to promote the development of WUAs as a whole. The leaders of WUAs together with PCMB leaders and staff participated in the workshops. When necessary, the relevant leaders of county and township governments also attended. The results of the case studies, experiences and feasible solutions were presented by the representative associations' leaders themselves. The situation of the specific stage and its problems were analysed by the plenary as a whole, and then action plans were formulated.

For the practical issues, the case and pilot studies were conducted not only at WUA level but also involved the representative WUGs. These studies were organized according to the irrigation system and usually consisted of a few subvillages of a village. In some cases the administrative village boundary was crossed. In this way, the regulations and procedures of irrigation management, acreage checking, etc could be substantially adapted to the situation at the grass-roots level, making them more practical and operative as well as relevant to the needs and wishes of water users.

Through these processes, the participation and initiatives of the WUA leaders were further promoted. The immediate and long-term interests of water users were also discussed, analysed and recognized. The solutions were correspondingly identified and actions taken accordingly. As a result water users began to see WUAs as their own organization, and this represented the foundation of sustainable PIM.

For all the case/pilot studies and workshops, visualization methods and PRA tools (such as problem analysis, pinboard, paper sheet and cards, etc) were used to ensure participation and systematic analysis. The moderator steered the discussion in a way that promoted the empowerment process.

- WUA leaders were elected from the group heads, and the number of executives in each WUA was reduced from seven people to only three;
- Contracts have been signed between WUAs and WUGs stipulating the various functions and responsibilities to be undertaken.
- WUAs have taken on greater responsibility for internal coordination, unified planning and communication between the upper and low levels.

These measures marked a further deepening of the management reform process as well as a significant step towards broadening the extent of farmer participation in water management. The adjustments to the management structures resulted from a growing recognition of the role to be played by WUAs and the limits on their capacity to fulfil that role. In this instance the adjustments were not the result of top-down administrative injunctions, but of careful consideration and deliberation by the associations, CNPAP project officers and the PCMB; they also reflected, via case studies and the use of PAR techniques, the needs and expectations of the water users.

The involvement of WUAs in project planning and supervision for the fourth construction cycle was carried out along the same lines as those followed in the second phase. That is, the associations were closely involved in project identification and design, quality supervision and final acceptance checking of the construction work. Following the experience gained in these activities during the third construction cycle, their involvement was even more active.

The associations also played an important supporting role in a major year-long exercise to survey, map, measure and identify all plots of land in the irrigated area. This was a necessary pre-condition for implementing the procedure of charging WUAs for water on a volumetric basis. Their involvement in the exercise served, on one hand, to help WUAs and WUGs gain a better appreciation of their responsibilities in the reformed water management structure, while also helping to increase public awareness of the work of the associations.

Achievements in Phase 3

The following were the main achievements of the third phase:

- As a result of the participation of WUAs in the overall process of project identification and design, quality supervision, and the final checking and approval of engineering works, the work undertaken in the third phase was more appropriate to the local situation and needs. Efficiency significantly increased, with the rate of fully acceptable engineering works improving greatly from 20 per cent in the second construction cycle to 86 per cent in the preliminary acceptance checking at the end of the third cycle of construction.
- The collection of water fees was completed earlier in the year than usual, which had a positive impact on the operations of the associations.
- A change in attitude has begun to take place among water users themselves: they are beginning to see the associations as bodies representing their own interests, and to understand that the associations do play an important role in water management.

Issues arising in Phase 3

The process of reform is ongoing, and by no means complete after four years. A number of issues were identified in the third phase and remain to be resolved. In addition the overall strategy has not yet been completed, and work remains to be done. Issues arising in the third phase include:

- Some confusion exists concerning the respective roles of the promoters and the WUA leadership. Hiring promoters to work full-time over a period of two to three years was to be an interim measure, necessary for the smooth implementation of reforms as they were consolidated. Because the promoters are hired and paid directly by the CNPAP office, however, the WUA leadership, who work part-time at their responsibilities and are paid from the revenues of the WUA, tend to rely on the promoters for many tasks which should rightfully be their own responsibility.

- WUGs have yet to play their full role in the operation of the system, particularly with regard to water supply planning and measurement of water delivered.
- Experience shows that some WUAs are too small to be financially viable on the basis of fees that can be collected from their irrigated areas. Thus much of the direct responsibility for collecting fees, managing water supply and maintenance of branch canals will be delegated to WUGs, while the seven WUAs will be amalgamated into five associations. This will result in some WUAs crossing administrative boundaries of townships, which may complicate their work in some respects, but will also serve to underline the separation of associations from township administration.

Other measures that remain to be taken, and will undoubtedly require further adjustment over time, include the establishment of an independent federation of WUAs to represent the interests of the associations in negotiating water management, supply and pricing with the PCMB. Moreover the aim of establishing a commercial relationship between WUAs and the PCMB based on the volume of water flowing into branch canals has yet to be fully implemented. It is only in the fourth construction cycle that the infrastructure necessary for measuring water volumes has been installed.

Key Stakeholders and the Process of Establishing the Participatory Initiative

Stakeholders

The primary stakeholders in the process of reform have been the PCMB, the WUAs, farmers and the CNPAP itself.

The Piyuan Canal management bureau (PCMB)

The PCMB has been the key stakeholder and the primary actor in the process of reform. Starting only with an interest in completing the rehabilitation of the main canal and constructing secondary infrastructure, the PCMB has come to recognize the essential nature of management reforms, and its members have become the main proponents and actors in the reform process. As a technical office with expertise in civil engineering, the experience, skills and attitudes in the bureau at the start of the project were not well suited to the demands of promoting reform. Its change in attitude was a necessary but not sufficient condition to carry out the reforms. Considerable institutional strengthening was also necessary, and has been provided in the form of training, study tours and support from external specialists.

The interest of the bureau has been to create an efficient, functional and sustainable irrigation system and management structure. This necessarily includes the ability to collect the fees for ongoing management and maintenance costs. The incentives for developing a sustainable management and operating system

were greatly increased following the organizational reform whereby the bureau became responsible for its own revenues and expenses. With the introduction of volume-based water fees in 2003 the bureau's very existence will depend on its ability to provide service to farmers.

From the initial passive acceptance of management reform as an externally imposed condition for financial support, the bureau now recognizes that it cannot afford to let the reform process fail.

Water user associations (WUAs)

The object of the reform process has been the creation of healthy, effectively functioning WUAs. At first the associations were initiated using top-down administrative intervention by the PCMB, and initially their participation was very passive. Even the establishment of the associations was generally undertaken to satisfy Dutch conditions for financial support. In the second phase of the process the associations had a larger scope of activity, but their involvement continued to be passive, undertaken at the instruction and under the guidance of the PCMB. The associations did not take any initiatives on their own.

The initial passive involvement of the associations can also be attributed to the fact that they themselves were unclear of their role in the management structure at the beginning of the reform process. Through activities such as the collection of water fees and participation in the planning and quality control of construction, the roles and responsibilities of the associations became clearer to members. In the second phase of development the authority of the associations has not been fully developed, however, and they have had to rely on support from the PCMB and township governments to carry out many of their functions. The authority of the associations is strengthening over time, but even into the third phase of development they would not be able to operate effectively without a large measure of support from township authorities.

It is expected that changes to the procedures for collecting water fees will be implemented in the summer of 2003, whereby WUAs will retain a portion of the fees in their own accounts rather than relying on a rebate from the PCMB. This will help to give the associations a greater degree of autonomy. Under the new scheme the associations will have a direct financial incentive to achieve efficiencies in water management.

It is also worth noting that even after three years of operation the first WUA, which had been established in a perfunctory manner, continues to be the one plagued with the most serious management problems.

Farmers

As the users of irrigation water and the primary source of revenue for the PCMB, farmers in the irrigation area are the main beneficiaries of the project. The objective of the farmers is to get access to water when and where it is needed. Experience in the first four years has shown that farmers generally are not averse to paying higher water fees if they receive improved services. Unlike most initiatives aimed at introducing participatory methods, both in other CNPAP

activities and elsewhere in China, the application of participatory approaches on the Piyuan Canal project has been somewhat unique in that it did not start with activities among farmer groups. There are a number of reasons for this, and most relate to the scope and the scale of change necessary to introduce the management reforms.

While farmers were keenly aware prior to the project that the irrigation system was not meeting their needs, it is unlikely that a plan for change at the necessary scale would have evolved from discussions at the village level or that the change could have been achieved by starting solely with a 'bottom-up' initiative. On small-scale irrigation projects supported by CNPAP, which involve several dozen households within a single village, the direct impact of the project and the need for O&M are readily apparent, and the challenge of introducing PIM practices has not been so great. The complexity of managing a canal 49km long and serving 20,000 households is of an entirely different order of magnitude, and necessitated a different approach. Moreover, unlike the minor irrigation schemes, which were newly built, historically the Piyuan Canal has been managed by government agencies. Therefore the initiative for management reform necessarily had to start with the organizations already responsible for management and operation of the scheme. As noted above, initially the relevant authorities were not convinced of the need for management reform or farmer participation in irrigation management, and only gradually has this support been forthcoming as experience has been gained.

Therefore farmer involvement in the project has been growing over time, carefully cultivated through an approach that started as top-down, and with the ultimate aim of ensuring full farmer participation.

The China–Netherlands Poverty Alleviation Project (CNPAP)

The CNPAP management office has been the main proponent of management reforms in the PCRP from the outset. The objective of the PMO has been to support the creation of an effective, sustainable irrigation scheme. At the same time the project aims to promote participatory approaches as a key element of rural development and poverty alleviation. In all CNPAP activities participation is taken to mean participation of all parties, including farmers, government and technical bureaux. Putting this into practice in the PCRP has meant that the PCMB is a partner rather than a client or an implementing arm of the project. The strategies and plans for putting the reforms into practice have been worked out in a process of consultation rather than imposed on the PCMB. This in turn requires a large element of flexibility in project implementation, as there is an ongoing learning process throughout, for all parties concerned.

Unlike the other stakeholders in the project the CNPAP PMO is very cognizant of the fact that it is a temporary body that will be dissolved upon project completion at the end of 2003. Beyond that, the management reforms will have to be carried out by the PCMB using the limited funding available to them through the collection of water fees. The temporary nature of CNPAP support has played a part in developing strategies for implementing the reforms, in particular the decision to hire promoters for each WUA to help consolidate the

reforms and the significant effort put into public awareness campaigns to communicate the purpose and nature of the reforms to the farmers in the irrigation area.

Secondary stakeholders

Township governments

Township governments have played a key supporting role throughout the reform process. The motivation of township governments is to provide improved services for farmers and reduce conflicts over water use between different groups of farmers or different water users. Township-level governments are severely constrained in their finances and suffered some loss of revenue when the new channels for collecting water fees were established. It can be hoped, however, that over the medium term the loss of revenue will be balanced out by the reduction of the township's responsibilities for irrigation management along the canal, and in particular for resolving disputes. Township governments are also interested in supporting the development of industry within their boundaries and in providing a safe drinking water supply, two distinct concerns that may occasionally conflict with irrigation interests.

Township governments have been brought into the reform process at the suggestion of the PCMB and the CNPAP, and at the request of the county leading group for water management reform, to coordinate land and labour issues, resolve disputes arising in the course of implementation and to confer legitimacy and authority on WUAs by supporting them. The involvement of township authorities in such issues is essential, particularly in the early stages of the process as the WUAs are being established. Disputes over water supply and construction are relatively common during the construction stages – for example, when land in one village or village group has to be expropriated to build a feeder canal serving a village further away from the main canal. Such disputes are beyond the ability of VCs to resolve, and nascent WUAs do not have sufficient authority to reach settlement.

County government

From the start of the project the county government was a key player in obtaining CNPAP financial support for the PCRP. The aim of the county was to achieve a well-functioning canal system to provide water for irrigation, industry and domestic consumption. The county's aim has also been to relieve itself of the financial burden of paying for the operation and maintenance of the system. While the project was initially seen in terms of construction and rehabilitation, over the course of implementation the key people in the county government have gained an awareness that management reforms were essential to ensure the sustainability of the canal. As that awareness has grown the necessary support has been forthcoming; in particular, the county government has made the necessary policy changes to make the reforms possible and has provided necessary support at key junctures in the process.

Domestic water users

Drinking water for the county town is drawn from the middle reaches of the Piyuan Canal. Domestic users therefore have a stake in the project in that they are interested in obtaining a reliable supply of safe drinking water at a reasonable price. To date the town water company has not been involved in the project, and there is no party to represent the interests of domestic water users. There is potential for a conflict of interests with farmers requiring water use in exceptionally dry years, and as the town is growing rapidly that potential will increase. Some thought has been given to the need, at some point in the future, to have a body representing the interests of domestic water consumers, but to date no steps in that direction have been taken.

Industrial, hydroelectricity and commercial users

Commercial water users are interested in obtaining a reliable supply of clean water, and getting it at the lowest price possible. There is no formal body representing the interests of commercial water users, but, as with the domestic users mentioned above, it is envisaged that at some point it might be necessary to have a body to represent their interests. Some conflicts of interest have already occurred with respect to water pricing, where entrepreneurs and elements of the county government responsible for promoting sideline industries have sought lower prices for water and exemption from volume-based water fees, particularly in water-intensive activities such as fish farming. To date such conflicts have been mediated by the county magistrate and the interests of the WUAs and farmers have been maintained. If water-intensive industries and sideline production continues to be developed along the Piyuan Canal, however, the potential for conflict over access to water in dry years becomes more acute.

Vehicles for establishing a participatory approach

In relation to vehicles for participation the following conclusions can be drawn:

- The overall promotion of WUA development is the responsibility of a CNPAP team. It consists of the director of the PCMB, the CNPAP project directors and the project officers in the PMO responsible for engineering and water management, and is supported by national and international short-term experts. This team makes decisions about the approach and other critical issues, and the executive members carry out implementation in the field. Through the case and pilot studies, workshops and on-the-job training facilitated by the consulting experts, the local project officers and PCMB's leader have become the major promoters of the development of WUAs and PIM.
- The administrative roles of the county and township governments were properly exerted to create an enabling environment for the development of WUAs. This was especially necessary at critical stages such as surveying the irrigated area and the collection of water fees. Support from county and township governments has been essential in the early stages of the reform

process, as the WUAs are newly created organizations and need a few years before they are strong and mature enough to function independently.

External Factors Influencing Participation

The process of implementing participatory irrigation reforms on a large scale requires large investments in time and money for raising public awareness, ensuring public acceptance and overcoming a variety of issues to carry out the reforms properly. It is often difficult to anticipate some of these issues in advance, and therefore a significant amount of flexibility in project implementation is necessary. Some examples from the PCRP, discussed below, indicate the type of issues encountered, their complexity and scale.

Land management

The process of management reform has been complicated by the fact that land records in the area are not accurate or consistent. In the 1980s, the family responsibility system was put into practice whereby commune land was allocated to individual families on the basis of family size. The allocation was done within production teams, now the equivalent of a natural village. However the allocation process was not consistent between teams, brigades or communes. In some instances equitable amounts of good-, medium- and poor-quality land were allocated to each family. In other instances the adjustments were made in the size of plot allocated. Thus one family might have been given two mu of poor land and another one mu of good land. In both cases the land registry showed that each family was given one mu of land.

While this procedure ensured a reasonably acceptable and equitable distribution of land resources and, consequently, of land taxes, the discrepancies between registered and actual area are large enough to create difficulties for rational allocation of water resources. In some areas the measured land might be more than twice as large as the registered land. Therefore measurement of the irrigated area through a detailed survey covering the entire irrigated area and demarcating the boundaries of every field was necessary. Following the survey a further exercise matching fields to households was undertaken for the purpose of collecting fees. This proved to be a year-long exercise, which was only finished at the end of 2002. The work met with a certain amount of resistance among farmers out of a concern that measurement of their actual land holdings might result in an adjustment to their agricultural taxes, and it was necessary to assure them that the measured area would be used for calculating water fees only.

The WUAs and WUGs played an important role in the process of surveying land and in particular the exercise of matching households to plots. This involved visiting every natural village in the irrigated area and matching the names of 20,000 households to plots of land. The allocation of water fees based on the newly measured areas will be implemented for the first time in the summer of 2003, and the willingness of farmers to accept the new measurements remains to be seen.

Taxation

Since 2001 Anhui has been a pilot province for tax reform, whereby the various discretionary fees levied on farmers by local governments were abolished and consolidated into a uniform tax. The implementation of this reform involved registering a 'farmer's burden' card for every family, on which all payments to local government authorities were recorded to ensure compliance with the reforms. At the same time, the new national water policy states that water should be considered a saleable commodity and a cost of production, and should therefore not be included in the farmer's burden. However, a considerable public relations effort was necessary to inform and convince farmers that water fees should not be included in their farmer's burden record, and were not subject to the maximum allowable levy that can be charged to farmers. This message was communicated through both mass media and the efforts of WUA staff and the promoters hired by the project.

Technical constraints

The new national policy on water resource management stipulates that water fees should be charged on a volumetric basis. There is a very real practical difficulty implementing such a policy in that the capacity to measure the volume of water used by individual farmers does not exist. On the Piyuan Canal measuring devices have been installed at each of the 108 branch canals, enabling the measurement of water volume drawn from the main canal. But since each branch canal irrigates an average of 42.6ha and serves an average of 760 households, the investment for physical facilities necessary to measure the volume of water used by individual farmers would be prohibitively expensive.

The solution adopted has been to measure the volume of water provided by the PCMB to each WUA, with the WUAs paying water fees based on volume. But the WUA in turn will have to convert that charge into an area-based fee to collect from households, and this poses a daunting management challenge. The task is complicated by the fact that when the new water laws were promulgated there was a great deal of publicity in national and provincial media, stating that the farmer's burden was being lightened, and that farmers would only have to pay for as much water as they used. Farmers in the Piyuan irrigation district launched objections to the ongoing use of area-based water fees, with copies of the provincial press reports in hand. The PCMB had to launch a large public awareness effort to redress the discrepancy between this perception and the physical reality.

Project Level Constraints on Participation

Project design and programmes

The design of the project, and the project strategy, have been important factors in the process of promoting change. The project was not prescriptive and did not present an action plan for putting PIM into practice, but rather started with a

framework and set of principles to be applied, while the actual process of putting the principles into effect was developed over time, adjusted and refined with experience. The initial precepts were:

- Irrigation management must be reformed in conjunction with the physical rehabilitation to ensure sustainable operation of the irrigation system.
- The guiding principle of all CNPAP activities is to introduce participatory approaches in all aspects of its activities. Moreover, international experience shows that PIM has proved an effective way of ensuring sustainable irrigation management.
- The CNPAP's aim was to support the PCMB to apply PIM practices as the overall direction of management reform.

The practical details of how this was to be achieved were developed over the course of time and on the basis of experience gained. In the CNPAP context participation means the participation not just of farmers but also of all the relevant technical and administrative agencies. Thus the specific course of action at every stage was determined through detailed discussions with all parties concerned.

The introduction of participatory approaches in the PCRP was facilitated by the fact that it has been part of a larger, comprehensive poverty alleviation project within the county. In all project activities ways and means are sought to apply participatory approaches. This has led to a greater awareness and acceptance of participation as a concept within local government agencies. It has also meant that project experience developing and applying participatory approaches in other areas of activity could be applied to the PCRP activities. CNPAP experience in applying PIM practices on small-scale irrigation projects has provided useful insights for the strategies applied in the PCRP, as has CNPAP experience supporting the development of farmer organizations in other sectors of activity.

Project capacity

A feature of the CNPAP is that project staff are almost all local people and the project operates with a minimum of international expertise. The Dutch co-director of the project holds this full-time position throughout the duration of the project. Twice yearly there are support missions of approximately two weeks' duration, comprising an international management consultant, an international water consultant and a Chinese project consultant. The purpose of these missions is to ensure that the project is abiding by the general principles of the project framework and, most importantly, to provide guidance for the ongoing development and strengthening of project activities. In addition to these expatriate inputs, the project has access to Chinese specialists such as the community development adviser from China Agricultural University, who provides a long term, part-time input. With the exception of these external inputs, the staff in the PMO are all local people from the county.

The advantage of this arrangement is that the project personnel have long experience in their respective areas of expertise within the county, and have a

thorough familiarity with the problems to be overcome and issues to be solved, the institutional structures and the people. The role of the external advisers is to provide new concepts and a framework for activities, and to establish an environment in which these concepts can be put into practice. The local staff then put the concepts into practice using their experience and knowledge, resulting effectively in a localization of international knowledge and experience. Project personnel have been introduced to the concepts of participation and PIM through advice and guidance, training opportunities and the joint development of project strategies. These concepts are then adapted to local requirements and put into practice. The insights and experience gained from putting the concepts into practice are then fed into further deliberations on strategic directions and practical planning for the next stage of the project. It is through such an iterative process that a deepening of the reform process has taken place, ensuring that the concepts are put into practice in a way that corresponds to the actual situation.

The environment and poverty–environment linkages

The combination of participatory irrigation management and reform of the water pricing mechanism has had a positive impact on the poor and disadvantaged. During the irrigation season conflicts between farmers over access to water and timing of access are not uncommon: it is not uncommon for farmers to be out in their fields in the middle of the night waiting to get their share of water or surreptitiously taking a share of water. In such circumstances the poor, who lack social capital, and the disadvantaged often get short-changed. These conflict situations often work to the detriment of women, who remain at home to take care of the family and farming while their husbands migrate in search of work.

Through participatory irrigation management, where local farmers control the supply of water through the branch canals, there is more responsive and structured water supply management. Coupled with the new pricing regime under which people cannot be expected to pay for water if they get no water, the association has an incentive to ensure all farmers get the water they require. This has led to reduced conflicts between farmers, and worked to improve the access of the poor and socially disadvantaged to water.

Lessons for PIM: The Institutionalization of Community Participation

Recognition of the need for PIM

Through participatory surveys and problem analysis, the water users' representatives reached consensus as to 'Why PIM is needed' (Figure 9.1) The approach commonly adopted to rural development and poverty alleviation work in Chinese administrative and government structures still derives from the days of the planned economy, and tends to follow a top-down approach. Policies are set by higher authorities and instructions are passed down as targets or quotas to lower

levels. The lower levels carry out the instructions, reporting success in terms of targets achieved. Their job performance is evaluated in relation to their success in meeting the targets, and this becomes an important indicator for career advancement. Little attention is paid to the actual processes used to achieve the results, and it is quite possible that the processes used not only do not achieve the original purpose, but may serve to achieve the opposite.[6]

The initial reaction of the county and township government authorities and the technical staff of the water conservation bureau was to adopt a similar top-down approach to implement management reforms. The top-down approach has also been followed in many other projects in China that have attempted to put PIM approaches into practice. Without attempting an evaluation of the success or merits of the approach in other cases, investigations focused on the PCRP indicated why such an approach would not lead to the desired results.

Reasons for the failure of 'top-down' PIM approaches

As detailed above, in Phase 1 the top-down and administrative approach to WUA formation that had characterized the World Bank-assisted projects was tried. Through the application of PAR (from Phase 2 onwards) the reasons why the World Bank model had not worked became clear.

The following difficulties in reforming the irrigation management system were found.

- World Bank projects tend to introduce management reform while providing large amounts of investment for physical construction, resulting in well-developed infrastructure. The PCRP, on the other hand still had a large amount of incomplete engineering works, especially at the level of secondary and tertiary canals. As a result the water demands of the users (relating to both the quantity and time of water supply) could not be satisfied to the extent that they are by large-scale, reasonably complete irrigation projects.
- On study tours to other irrigation schemes in which PIM or the SIDD model have been implemented through a top-down approach, it has been noted that the relationship between WUAs and the water supply organization is not always as arms-length as the SIDD model envisages. In the Pishihang project, whose engineers drew up the first detailed proposals for management reforms for the PCRP, the WUA heads are staff members of the local water authority. The aim of the PCRP is ultimately to have truly independent WUAs. It requires organization and leadership to achieve that result, however, and the PCMB as the main stakeholder is largely responsible for fostering independent WUAs.
- As a result of the abundant rainfall and the availability of other water sources (such as rivers and hill ponds), water from the Piyuan Canal is not an indispensable source of water every year, as in the case of many large-scale irrigation projects. Rather, in a significant number of areas water from the Piyuan Canal is a only a complementary source for water users. In years of average or more than average rainfall many farmers have no need to draw water from the canal – but the high variability of annual rainfall also means that the canal is a vital source of water in drought years.

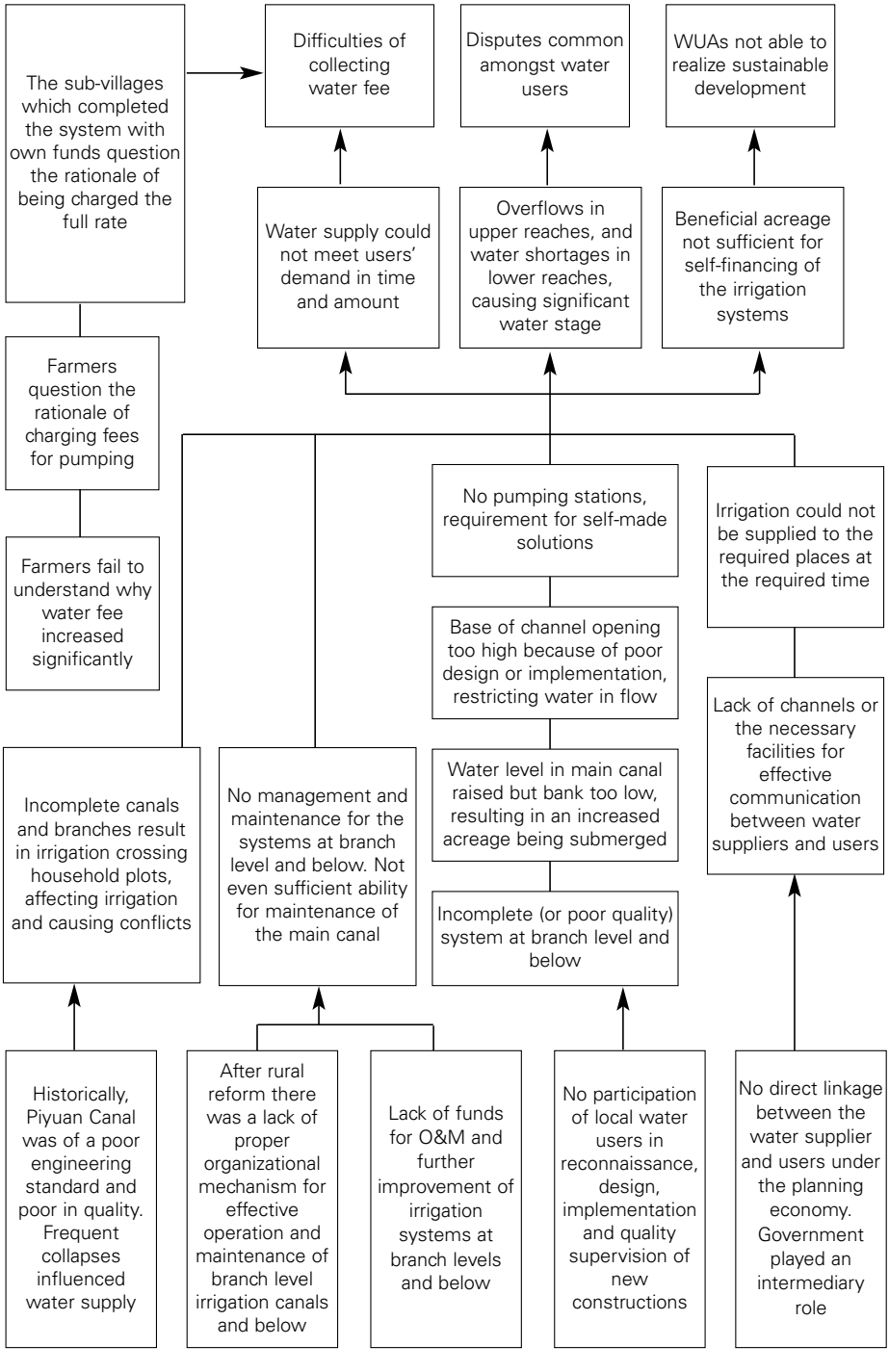


Figure 9.1 *The result of group discussions on why participatory irrigation management is needed*

- In some areas, users have never been charged for water and there is a resistance to paying fees under the reformed system. This is especially the case in the upland areas where the users pump water from the canal at their own expense for machinery, electricity and fuel.

Human resources

In the first phase of the project both the construction and management activities were carried out by the PCMB under the supervision of the CNPAP office. By the end of the first phase it became apparent that the challenge of carrying out management reforms and ensuring the full participation of the WUAs was beyond the capacity of the PCMB on its own, owing to both inappropriate skills and a limited number of staff. The culture of the bureau was rooted in the engineering discipline, and traditionally the interface between the bureau and farmers was in the form of 'passing down instructions'.

The project therefore provided a number of training opportunities to bureau staff in the use of participatory techniques and the role of outside mediators in promoting community organizations. This training was sometimes organized specifically for staff of the PCMB and sometimes offered in conjunction with training provided by the CNPAP for the wide variety of community organizations supported by the project. The need for training and developing new skills has been recognized by the PCMB itself, as can be seen by the fact that it has organized training for its staff in public relations.

Following the first phase the project supplemented the manpower for promoting the management reform process by hiring a local person as field officer and a community development specialist from the China Agricultural University to coordinate and support the establishment of WUAs. The field officer was a retired township Party secretary with skills in organization and public affairs rather than an engineering background.[7]

Training has been provided for WUA executives and for leaders of the WUGs. This has included technical training in monitoring and supervising construction activities, water supply planning, water management and infrastructure maintenance. WUA executives have also had training in participatory approaches, management and leadership skills. Technical training has been provided by the PCMB, while the training on management and participatory approaches was provided by the community development specialist.

At the end of the second phase it became apparent that even more intensive effort was required to promote the reforms, and seven promoters were hired directly by the project to assist the WUAs with their public awareness and mobilization activities. The promoters were also non-engineers, and generally people with experience in organization and management. The promoters received training in the administrative and technical details of the reform process as well as training in using participatory approaches.

The additional staffing brought to bear for the implementation of the reforms is seen as a temporary measure to ensure smooth implementation and widespread understanding and acceptance of the reforms. It is expected that once the reforms have been completed and the new structures are operating smoothly the

field officer and promoters will become redundant and the PCMB and WUAs will be able to operate without additional support. Experience has shown, however, that considerable investments are needed to ensure broad understanding and support for the implementation of PIM reforms.

Attitudes and administrative culture

Changing attitudes has been a key challenge during the process of water management reforms, and considerable success has been achieved. There is a common tendency in local government work in China towards formalism or superficiality, whereby it is made to appear that policies, instruction or directives have been followed while in actual implementation the objectives of the approaches or policies advocated have not been respected, or have even been violated. This practice is found not only in donor-funded projects but also in the implementation of national policies in a number of areas. The vast size of the country and the bureaucratic apparatus, together with a relatively high degree of local autonomy in policy implementation, serve to reinforce this tendency to the point where it has often become a habit.

Overcoming this tendency towards formalism requires that the local officials and key stakeholders involved in introducing new innovations be themselves convinced of the significance and value of the innovation, and also that they be empowered by their immediate superiors to implement the innovation.

In the first phase of the project, in meetings and public forums, the attitudes of county and water bureau officials could be discerned from comments frequently made such as 'we are grateful to CNPAP for supporting the rehabilitation of the Piyuan Canal, and a condition of the support is that the management structure be reformed'. By the second phase of the project, however, this had become: 'reform of the management system is essential, and fortunately we have Dutch support to carry out the reforms'. This change can be attributed to a number of factors: a better awareness on the part of the PCMB staff of the significance of the reforms; evidence of the success of the reforms through such indicators as improved water fee collection; experience with more effective supervision of construction and coordination with farmers; and the administrative reform which made the PCMB reliant on the sale of water as its sole source of revenue.

Individual factors also come into play. Between the second and third construction seasons personnel adjustments were made within the PCMB that resulted in a younger person being given primary responsibility for the project. The change in style was immediately apparent, with far more importance being given to the management aspects of the canal in spirit as well as in form. In fact, the new bureau director adopted participation as a style in managing the bureau's internal affairs. This serves to illustrate the importance of individuals, particularly those in leadership roles, in promoting the full adoption of participatory approaches.

The change of attitudes has also been reinforced by the recognition and sanction of senior county leadership. Throughout CNPAP activities in all nine sectors of activity in the county, participatory approaches are applied as a guiding

principle. By the third year of the project the approaches introduced by CNPAP were achieving readily apparent results in a number of areas, with the result that the senior leadership in the county began to recognize the efficacy of participatory approaches. In his report of 25 February 2003 to the fourteenth county people's congress on government work, the county magistrate advocated the use of participatory approaches for rural development and poverty alleviation work, recommending that county officials 'fully promote participatory working methods and raise the organizational skills of farmers'. In the top-down administrative culture prevailing in China this level of endorsement for participatory approaches is invaluable in legitimizing the approaches in the eyes of subordinate officials.

Township governments

Changing the attitudes of officials at the level of township leadership poses a particular set of challenges. As the lowest level of government hierarchy and the one with most direct relevance to farmers, the involvement and support of township-level government is critical to the process of reform. The attitudes and motivational factors of township officials, however, are not necessarily in accordance with the objectives of the reforms. At the township level officials are generally faced with overwhelming demands from above and popular pressures from below. They generally have limited resources at their disposal and they tend to have relatively short tenures in any particular position. In these circumstances their highest priority is to meet immediate, pressing needs with the scarce resources available. Consideration of less tangible issues like the long-term sustainability of irrigation systems and irrigation management structures does not necessarily receive their highest priority.

Once WUAs started collecting water fees directly and remitting these to the PCMB there was an immediate negative impact on township governments, given that previously funds had been diverted from water fees to the township's general revenues. Successful implementation of the reforms could provide a benefit to township officials, however, if it reduced or removed their burden of involvement in irrigation management and maintenance. Outside of the Piyuan irrigation district, in the townships of Huoshan where most of the CNPAP's activities have been concentrated, township officials have recognized that the application of participatory principles helps improve the sometimes rocky relationship between 'the cadres and the masses' – although the scale and complexity of the Piyuan Canal management reforms are such that a significant amount of time and effort is needed up front before the process starts to bear fruit.

Finances

The inadequacy of financial resources for sustainable water management is a key problem the project is aimed at resolving. The reform of the PCMB, meant to make it entirely self-sufficient in its revenues and expenditure, has helped to align the objectives of the bureau with those of the farmers. The bureau's revenues

come from sale of water, and when water is sold on a volumetric basis the PCMB has a strong incentive to provide water when and where required. There is potentially a conflict of interest between the PCMB and the WUAs because water is sold to industry at a higher price than irrigation water. As yet the demand for water from industries along the canal does not threaten to curtail use for irrigation.

The transition from village and township governments collecting water fees to the collection of water fees by the associations has been achieved, though not without some difficulties along the way. The charging of water fees based on volume, a key element in the overall strategy, could not be implemented until the necessary physical infrastructure was in place to allow measurement of water, and will only begin in the irrigation season of 2003. With this new fee-charging structure, further innovations will become possible that should serve to strengthen the independence of the WUAs. Up to the end of 2002 the WUAs collected water fees on behalf of the PCMB, paid the fees in full to the bureau, and were refunded a portion of the fees on a formula worked out between the WUAs and the PCMB. Once volumetric charging is implemented the WUAs will collect water fees from farmers, pay the PCMB for the volume of water taken at a set price, and retain the balance for their own use. The WUAs will therefore have more autonomy in the use of their funds as well as a very direct incentive to improve their water management performance, as they will receive direct financial benefits.

Structures

The establishment of the PCMB as a unit separate from the county water conservation bureau has had a very positive impact on the introduction of PIM practices. As an independent accounting unit responsible for its own revenues and expenses, it has a vested interest in providing a high level of service to the WUAs so as not to risk jeopardizing its own income stream. With the transition to volume-based water fees this pressure increases.

As a distinct unit, the PCMB also has a higher degree of autonomy in its own planning and decision-making process. This has been reflected in the adjustment of personnel assignments within the bureau to meet the needs of the reform process. The bureau director has assigned one staff member to liaise with and support the associations (in addition to the CNPAP field officer) and made another person responsible for public relations work, including broad-based public awareness campaigns to ensure farmers in the irrigation area are aware of the new water laws, policies and management procedures.

The bureau is not a completely independent commercial organization, as envisaged in the SIDD model. It remains under the overall authority of the county government and the water conservation bureau and in some areas, such as rationalizing staff numbers (as opposed to staff assignments), freedom of action is still restricted. It is also subject to county government authority on issues such as water supply for industry and domestic consumption, but throughout the duration of the project county government influence over the PCMB has tended to be benign.

Systems and procedures

A new codified set of procedures is currently being drafted by the PCMB that will become the main document establishing county policy for water management along the Piyuan Canal. The document takes into account both changes in national water law over recent years and the specific experience of the PCRP. As noted above, recent changes in national water law and policy have been in harmony with the water management reforms supported by the CNPAP in the PCRP.

This management policy is expected to be presented to the county government and the county people's congress for final approval in July or August 2003. The WUAs have been consulted in the drafting of the new policy, and the policy takes account of the role of WUAs and the yet-to-be-established federation of WUAs in water management.

The structures and operational procedures of the WUAs have been revised and refined through the course of the project. Initially seven WUAs were formed, with five to seven office holders in each association. Experience suggested that the tasks could be better performed by a larger number of WUGs, formed along branch canals, and the reduction of the role of the WUAs to a coordinating function, with fewer office holders. From experience it was also seen that the seven associations could be amalgamated into five, for greater management efficiencies. The 2003 irrigation season, the first in which volume-based pricing will be practised, may suggest further modifications to the systems and procedures of the associations. The creation of a federation of WUAs, expected to take place in 2003, will also serve to clarify the roles of the WUAs within the system. Whatever further modifications and refinements there might be, it is clear that the associations will continue to exist, and that they have an essential role to play in the reformed irrigation management system.

A new localized model of PIM

Based on the experience of the PCRP, the case and pilot studies, and an understanding of the local situation, problems and solutions, PIM can be defined as a process of:

- creating organizations, structures and procedures through which water users can play a role in water management with water supply authorities through a processes of dialogue and negotiation;
- transferring powers of management and decision-making relating to irrigation systems to WUAs;
- facilitating the awareness of water users, so that they recognize the WUA as an organization representing their interests (this involves both a recognition that WUAs have been established to meet their needs and that they have the authority to manage the development of the WUAs themselves); and
- capacity building and institutionalization in order to achieve effective operation and sustainable development of the irrigation systems.

The principles for the development of PIM could be summarized as:

- The organizational structure and operational mechanism of WUAs should be adapted to the nature of the engineering works and the prevailing socio-economic conditions, which might be unique in any particular association.
- The organization and operation of WUAs should be in harmony with relevant national policies and laws as well as with local regulations.
- The development of PIM should involve genuine participation by water-user households, in order to realize self-management, maintenance and development of WUAs.
- The institutional and economic arrangements made between WUA and suppliers should be mutually beneficial.

The preconditions for the effective development of WUAs in the Piyuan Canal project include:

- The physical irrigation infrastructure should be sufficiently well developed to enable the delivery of water in response to the needs of farmers. That is, if the reform process isn't accompanied by physical rehabilitation of the infrastructure, and if farmers' demands for water cannot be adequately met because of lack of system capacity, farmer support for the new management structures will not be forthcoming.
- The irrigation acreage should be large enough to ensure adequate revenue from water fees. In setting up a management structure, careful consideration must be given to balancing the size of the irrigated area (and hence potential revenues) with the management costs inherent in the structure.
- The leadership and relevant agencies in the county and township governments should support the development of WUAs, providing the necessary co-ordination and conferring on them the necessary legitimacy.

Conclusions and experiences

Participatory approaches do not come naturally or easily to rural government structures, but can be accepted and accommodated if they are seen to bring results that are meaningful to the relevant key stakeholders in terms of their own institutional imperatives.

When put into practice on a scale which precludes direct intervention by principal players, the introduction of participatory practices must be staged over an appropriate time frame. This is necessary to ensure that relevant parties involved in putting the innovations into practice can see for themselves the efficacy of the approach. Rushing changes, or putting changes into practice by administrative injunction, runs the risk that the change will be implemented in a perfunctory, formalistic manner, hence disillusioning the people who are meant to be the key beneficiaries and at the same time discrediting the approach.

While participatory practices are intended to give greater voice to farmers and sections of the population generally disenfranchised in the current institutional structures, these sections of the population don't take naturally to the approaches. The disillusionment and alienation from the local government hierarchy of the population at large has to be overcome and a sense of ownership (which is not

actively sought by farmers) has to be fostered as part of the process of introducing participation.

Other conclusions include the following:

- PIM techniques have been introduced in a medium-scale irrigation project through a combination of top-down and bottom-up approaches. Starting with a predominantly top-down approach to initiate the reforms, the amount of local initiative and control was increased as the reforms deepened and became entrenched. Reflecting on the experience of the Piyuan Canal, it is likely that this is the only way to approach such a reform over such a broad area. In the top-down process with which the reform begins, however, the ultimate objective of transferring control to farmers must always be borne in mind, as a multitude of risks and challenges that can derail this objective will need to be overcome in the process.
- Establishing effective WUAs takes time and detailed work, especially because it involves fundamental changes to the attitudes of both farmers and officials. Their attitudes and habits are not naturally conducive to the introduction of such reforms, but a strong pragmatic streak prevails, according to which the reforms will be accepted if they can be seen to solve recognized problems. Because the construction, irrigation and maintenance seasons follow each other in an annual cycle, the process can be expected to take a number of years as experience and understanding are gained.
- Provision has to be made for the costs involved in carrying out the reform process. These can be quite substantial and include training, public relations and public awareness, costs for additional personnel and costs for overcoming obstacles encountered in the course of the reforms. The objective is to achieve financial sustainability over the longer term, but irrigation schemes are generally hard-pressed to cover ongoing management and maintenance costs from their revenues, and the process of reform necessarily involves start-up costs. To launch a process of reform relying solely on existing revenue sources will jeopardize the thoroughness with which the work must be done.
- Reforms cannot be brought about without the strong understanding and support of local government, but reformed associations must be independent of local government.
- Management of the process of change cannot be left to the water management authorities alone. Engineering backgrounds and skills must be supplemented by people skills and management skills to guide the process. Put in a broader context, experience from the PCRP suggests that staff from existing technical bureaux, who have training and experience in areas of technical expertise, may not be able to apply participatory approaches without support from external specialists with a broader frame of reference.
- If participatory approaches are to be promoted in the setting of a project funded by foreign donors there must be ample flexibility to adapt the project interventions and activities as appropriate over the course of time. It is unlikely that a detailed schedule of activities, inputs and outputs could be prepared at the outset of a project. On one hand, external experience, while valuable as a reference, has to be adapted to the local circumstances. On the

other hand, participation means participation of implementing partners and bringing them along as part of the process. To ensure they are full partners in the process and have a sense of ownership, strategies and activities must be developed jointly as the project progresses, rather than being imposed by external agents. If, as is hoped, the project evokes changes in the attitudes of the implementing agencies, the strategies and approaches devised at the outset are bound to change once experience is gained.

Notes

1 Huoshan is a nationally designated poverty county.
2 The scale of the project is an important factor contributing to the complexity of the task. CNPAP has also supported the construction of small scale irrigation projects covering between 100 and 1,000 *mu*, and involving anywhere from 20 to several hundred households. Experience has shown that by following a standard set of procedures effective participatory irrigation management on such schemes can generally be successfully introduced within one year.
3 'China: Empowering Farmers through Democratic Management of Irrigation Water', World Bank website, www.web.worldbank.org.
4 Website of the International Network on Participatory Irrigation Management (INPIM) see www.inpim.org.
5 A similar situation was found on the small-scale irrigation projects supported by the CNPAP in the mountainous areas of Huoshan, where the construction contracting was done by township governments. In an external review carried out by the Anhui policy research bureau, construction bosses were quoted as saying, 'We don't worry about supervision by official bodies, but we are afraid of supervision by farmers' organizations.'
6 A recent case in point is the national 'land recovery' (*tuigeng huanlin*) programme which was intended to address serious soil erosion problems in major watersheds by giving farmers a cash and grain subsidy for reforesting cultivated hillsides. The mechanistic approach of setting targets, as described above, has resulted in farmers planting poplar trees in terraced rice paddies.
7 A similar situation was seen in the World Bank-funded project introducing SIDD practices in the Tieshan irrigation system in Hunan Province, where a schoolteacher became the chief protagonist and key promoter of PIM reforms.

10

Towards Sustainable Village Poverty Reduction: The Development of the County Poverty Alleviation Planning (CPAP) Approach

Li Xiaoyun and Joe Remenyi

Over the last two years, the Leading Group Office for Poverty Alleviation and Economic Development in Backward Areas (LGOP) has worked with local specialists, the ADB and the UNDP, to develop a participatory approach toward village poverty reduction (VPR) through reforms to County Poverty Alleviation Planning (CPAP). The CPAP approach to poverty alleviation marks a departure from traditional top-down planning to the use of community-based methodologies in poverty mapping and the development of local poverty reduction interventions.[1] A programme of pilot projects has been used, primarily with the support of bilateral donors and LGOP internal resources, to build the capacity of LGOP staff and key decision-makers from national, provincial and local levels of government to adopt the CPAP framework. This framework features participatory strategies of data collection and poverty analysis; it aims to involve the target population in the identification of solutions as well as implementation and performance monitoring. Capacity to embrace the participatory foundations of CPAP remains the single most important constraint on the rapid and effective implementation of this innovation in national poverty policy in China.

The State Council's announcement in late 2001 that China's poverty policy would be reformed to sharpen its focus on VPR represents an important first step towards the mainstreaming of participatory methods at national policy level. It is important, therefore, to understand this shift in the historical context of how poverty alleviation policy in China has evolved, especially since the radical market-oriented reforms of 1978. Accordingly, this chapter begins with a very brief overview of China's poverty policy, placing CPAP within the immediate past and current institutional and policy context. After describing the CPAP process and its constituent elements, the chapter considers the main constraints affecting the implementation of the approach. Finally, some conclusions are drawn, with a reflection on key issues including capacity building, maintenance and advocacy.[2]

Overview of Poverty Alleviation Policy and Activity in China[3]

China's reform towards a market-oriented economy has brought about significant changes in the political and social context of rural development. The process of rural reform has gradually removed the political and economic barriers that constrained the initiative of farmers and their ability to take individual responsibility for their production decisions. Gradually, the market-friendly reforms that have transformed the rural economy right across China are being extended to the industrial sector and all fields of social, economic and political life in urban centres.

The most important change accompanied a process of fiscal decentralization, shifting decision-making over resource allocation to the lower levels of government. The process of decentralization of the economic system is ongoing, but the shift has enabled the central government in Beijing to deliberately encourage the spread of people's participation in local level decision-making. Since the end of the 1990s, it is possible to see these trends as representing serious steps to promote a limited form of grass-roots democracy. The promulgation and implementation of the Organic Law on Village Committees is indicative of the progress that has been made in promoting people's participation in rural areas. In the main, these reforms in local area governance do mean that villagers are able to choose their leaders through what is intended to be a process of free elections. Some urban areas have also begun to experiment with elections for local-level representatives, indicating a further testing of democratic-style processes at the local level, thus cementing the break with traditional top-down political procedures. The political consequences of these changes can be expected to flow through to the processes by which development planning and priority setting is done at local level.

The development of poverty alleviation policy

The policy framework for poverty alleviation in China can be divided into four primary strategies implemented between 1950 and 1980.

The first strategy, promulgated in the 1950s, involved a land reform programme that enabled poor farmers to gain access to land. This was further bolstered through China's rural collectivization movement (albeit only within the framework of state farms and rural production brigades).

The second strategy, first adopted in the 1960s, was a national welfare programme called the *Five Guarantees for Households in Extreme Poverty*. Applied in both rural and urban areas, this programme, administered by the Ministry of Civil Affairs, has been especially important for marginalized groups (including the aged and disabled) and those rural households subject to chronic food insecurity. Nonetheless, financial constraints meant that this welfare programme was always limited in its coverage – only an estimated 1 per cent of rural and less than 1 per cent of the urban population benefited from the programme.

The third strategy utilized central government Subsidies for Poor Region Development to support provincial programmes in education, healthcare and

related human resource development and infrastructure development. Expenditure on infrastructure typically dwarfed the support for human capital development by a factor of ten, yet the programme did much to ensure access to basic needs by all residents in areas where the programme was implemented. The programme was managed by the State Development Planning Commission (SDPC). Its methodology was based on classic top-down planning procedures, which gave precedence to the support of centralized political priorities with government funding rather than locally defined needs and opportunities.

The fourth strategy focused on the modernization of China's economy through the industrialization of manufacturing and rural production. An important outcome of this strategy was a major shift in employment from the rural to the urban sector, accelerated by the free-market reforms of 1978 and the decade thereafter.

Prior to 1980, these four independent but overlapping strategies constituted the basis of national poverty alleviation policy in China. There is reason to believe that after 1980 the opening up of China's economy to participation in international trade, foreign-funded joint ventures and rapidly expanding rates of investment in technology transfer swamped the impact of these policies on the incidence of rural poverty. Unfortunately, the extent to which these policies were rendered less and less relevant by the jump in regional and macro-economic growth rates in the two decades to 2000 is difficult to assess. There was no attempt to monitor the impact of these four strategies, and little official concern was expressed over the clear bias in the distribution of the benefits of accelerating growth in favour of the best-resourced provinces and coastal urban centres in the east and central provinces of China after 1978. Through much of the 1980s, therefore, and well into the 1990s, poverty reduction planning remained ad hoc, poorly integrated into mainstream development planning (other than as a trickle-down by-product of economic growth), and liable to neglect in the absence of a systematic and deliberate approach, poverty targeting, and performance monitoring and evaluation. Nonetheless, the liberalizing forces released with the national macro-economic reforms of 1978 also introduced a shift in public finance in favour of user-pays approaches to development planning and finance. Gradually the government of China realized that if users are to contribute to the cost of interventions relating to their development, greater attention must be given to targeting and the distribution of the benefits of development investments.

The data on trends in the incidence of poverty in China since 1980 are unequivocal. They show that over the decade and a half to 1995 the incidence of poverty declined significantly. Whether one uses the official Chinese poverty line of US$0.60 per person per day, or the World Bank standard of US$1 per person per day, it is clear that poverty in China has declined in both absolute and relative terms. The official statistics suggest that the number of rural Chinese in poverty fell by 200 million in the two decades to 2000, with the extant poverty to be addressed embracing not more than 10 per cent of the rural population.[4] The data also show, however, that the poorest households in rural China are being marginalized, with an increasing proportion of national poverty reduction resources leaking to benefit the not-poor, and the distribution of gains from

rapid economic growth bypassing the hard-core rural poor. In particular, non-poor rural households or those better-off than their poorest neighbours have often captured the benefits of top-down poverty reduction initiatives. This outcome arises because these households are better prepared to benefit from government assistance to resettlement schemes, for example, and are more likely to resettle successfully than their poorer neighbours. User-pays requirements favour households able to finance contributions to matching-funds programmes over the poorer households. As a result, recent studies of resettlement projects have found that those most in need have been marginalized and denied access to newly opened irrigated areas.[5] Ironically, time has revealed that the benefits from resettlement schemes have proved unsustainable because of poor project design, under-resourcing, and inadequate attention to the management of conflicts over natural resource use – particularly conflicts over access to water, water pricing, and responses to secondary salination in reclaimed areas. Government officials tended to rely on feedback and advice from the better-off households, with the result that resettlement programmes were increasingly divorced from their original goal of helping the poor achieve sustainable improvement in their livelihoods.

The National Poverty Alleviation Programme

China's formal National Poverty Alleviation Programme was officially launched in 1986 with the establishment of the LGOP. This group, which came to be known simply as the Leading Group, brought together the heads of the main line ministries and agencies.[6] These agencies were considered by the State Council to be the key policy-making and implementation stakeholders and their cooperation was essential for an integrated coordinated national approach to poverty reduction.

At its inaugural meeting, the LGOP defined absolute poverty in China as resting on four criteria:

1 annual per capita income of US$53 (in 1985 prices);
2 food deficit for at least three months a year;
3 lack of access to drinking water within 2km (horizontal) or 100m (vertical) distance from the home; and
4 lack of irrigation water for at least six months of the year.

The inaugural session of the LGOP also identified the core goal of national poverty policy to be the assurance of the basic needs of all the poor by 1990. Once this goal had been fulfilled, the locus of national poverty eradication would be shifted to China's western provinces, to the old revolutionary provinces of central and southern China, and to provinces where minority groups represent a significant proportion of poor households.[7]

By the beginning of the 1990s, the LGOP had refined these broad national poverty reduction priorities to highlight official support for the development of local economies through the promotion of small and medium enterprises utilizing local resources. This shift heralded a decade of public sector subsidies

for the formation of township and village enterprises (TVEs), which were intended to create off-farm employment opportunities for the rural poor. It also resulted in the provision of central government funding for local infrastructure development, particularly the construction of roads, communications and water infrastructure. The government's commitment to the resettlement of rural people (from unsustainable environments) into newly developed irrigation areas, and to infrastructure development (through Food for Work programmes) were both incorporated into the LGOP's mandate. Gradually each province established its own office of the LGOP, resulting in the formation of a nationwide network of provincial and county-based poverty alleviation and development offices (PADOs) for organizing and implementing the LGOP programme. Funding for the LGOP and its network of PADOs was obtained through the central government budget, with a formal allocation specified in the national five-year plan.

The National Poverty Alleviation Programme in China was funded through grants and loans from the national to the provincial level of government. Funds were allocated to each province according to proposals submitted. These proposals were meant to reflect the resources needed to achieve the poverty reduction target set within the provincial development plan.[8] All ministries were directed by the central government to take responsibility for poverty alleviation, with the result that each ministry also funded, from its own resources, its internal office for poverty alleviation. By the start of the 1990s, therefore, China had a poverty alleviation programme that was not only implemented through the LGOP's network of local PADOs, but also through individual line ministries that were obliged to establish and operationalize department-specific poverty alleviation activities, utilizing their line staff at the local level.

In 1994, the government launched an anti-poverty strategy called the 8-7 Poverty Alleviation Plan. This plan sought to address institutional shortcomings to achieve more explicit poverty targeting. Through targeting poorer areas and population groups, the strategy aimed to match the rates of poverty reduction achieved in the 1980s. The 8-7 plan identified 592 poor counties as primary targets of the National Poverty Alleviation Programme, and adopted a poverty reduction target of 80 million rural poor by 2001. Officially, the existence of urban poverty continued to be denied.

The 8-7 plan introduced innovations in programme integration, revising policy and governance practices to raise the priority given to education, health and cultural aspects of development in poor counties. At household level, a small-scale loan programme (funded via policy loans distributed and administered through the Agricultural Bank of China) was introduced for the first time. The 8-7 plan consolidated the importance of the LGOP as the lead poverty reduction agency in China, giving it responsibility for all aspects of poverty reduction planning. However, this step also served to divorce the SDPC from the need to ensure that village-level poverty reduction targets are integrated into province-wide development plans. The State Statistics Bureau remained responsible for impact monitoring, making it more difficult for the LGOP to ensure that national poverty reduction priorities are responsive to performance monitoring. The participatory methods that are the foundation

stones of the CPAP approach to VPR address both of these shortcomings directly.

The 8-7 plan was an important advance in national poverty policy in China. However, it did not stem the leakage of public sector resources to the non-poor. Nor did the 8-7 plan provide a mechanism to ensure that the benefits of economic growth could be directed towards poor households. Despite the stated objectives, the 8-7 plan lacked explicit poverty targeting mechanisms: the participation of poor households in project design was not encouraged; gender issues were not given prominence; and attention to sustainability was rhetorical rather than practical. Poverty reduction planning was almost entirely top-down, and 8-7 did little to ensure that China's national poverty programme did not by-pass the poor. Indeed, as the new millennium approached, official statistics indicated that progress in reducing the incidence of poverty in rural China was stalling, possibly even in reverse. The State Council, the LGOP and the donor community were increasingly nervous that the favourable poverty reduction trends of previous decades were, at best, stagnating.

In the latter years of the 1990s, China's gross domestic product (GDP) increased at twice the pace of household income. In the rural sector, while agriculture's contribution to GDP declined from 23 per cent in 1985 to 12 per cent in 1998, 70 per cent of the rural labour force still found primary employment in agriculture.[9] Rural unemployment increased, as did the pressures and incentives for rural people to migrate to urban areas in search of work and more secure livelihoods. In a report on poverty in China published in 2000,[10] the World Bank and the UNDP attributed the slowing in the rate of poverty reduction to three main factors:

1 ineffective poverty targeting, reflected in the rising proportion of poverty reduction resources that do not reach the poor;[11]
2 perverse fiscal policies that have led to taxation systems in which the poorest 20 per cent of rural households are paying 50 per cent of taxes collected in rural areas; and
3 increasing income inequality in the rural areas (income inequality increased by 23 per cent in rural China in 1988–95).

Recent policy changes

In May 2001 the State Council convened a national poverty alleviation meeting coordinated by the LGOP as the newly authorized public sector agency responsible for national poverty reduction strategy formulation, policy design and implementation. At this meeting the State Council endorsed a new national poverty reduction strategy to address the problem of endemic poverty and the leakage of national poverty resources to the not-poor. The new policy shifted the geographical focus of poverty policy in two important ways: (1) future poverty policy (and funding) would be directed at the primary source of poverty in rural China – poor villages; and (2) national poverty policy would concentrate on village poverty in the poorest regions in China (including without being limited to the western provinces, the old revolutionary bases,[12] sensitive border areas with

poorly developed infrastructure, and areas with significant minority populations). To implement this strategy, county authorities were given responsibility, previously delegated to provincial agencies, to ensure that those villages designated as poor are successfully integrated into regional and national poverty planning processes.

Since that national meeting of May 2001, the 592 nationally designated poor counties (of which 38 counties were located in eastern and central provinces) have been replaced in the National Poverty Alleviation Programme by 592 key working poor counties (KWCs), almost all of which are located in the western provinces.[13] Only KWCs are eligible to access national poverty alleviation funds, though the government of China has directed that counties not included in the list of KWCs must develop and fund their own poverty reduction programmes.[14]

Other governance changes embodied in the revised poverty reduction policy include a willingness to explore poverty reduction methods based on local participation, gender targeting, community-based planning, and an expanded role for NGOs in implementation, progress monitoring and impact assessment. Village poverty reduction (VPR) planning is at the heart of the new programme, with individual village plans based on the situation-specific needs of the poor. With the assistance of the county LGOP, VPR groups (VPRGs) are envisaged as the key vehicle to lead the village planning process. The role of county government is limited to ensuring that village poverty plans are integrated into the county development plan (CDP), setting specific poverty reduction targets for each plan period and ensuring that national poverty reduction resources are directed at income and employment generation initiatives identified by VPRGs. It is also left to the local LGOP to ensure that the methodology and guidelines to be applied in implementing VPR are appropriate and flexible enough to account for socio-economic, cultural and geographic differences between counties.

As a result of these changes, China's current VPR strategy includes, as a key element, participatory approaches to assess and solve the main causes of chronic poverty. Because the county is the lowest level of local government with which national authorities have direct contact, administration of the policy is coordinated through county-based authorities, including county-level offices of the LGOP. The methodology underlying the national strategy is referred to as county poverty alleviation planning (CPAP). CPAP builds from the village up, using the rich layer of indigenous knowledge of village communities to identify sustainable income and employment generation activities, plus wealth creation initiatives, for inclusion in a village poverty reduction plan. Participatory methods of problem analysis, needs identification, activity designs, budgeting, progress monitoring and impact assessment lie at the heart of the CPAP approach.

It is the promise of community participation that marks CPAP as being critically different from earlier national poverty reduction strategies. However, the State Council has directed that VPR should be achieved with a minimum of bureaucratic conflict and without substantial reform of existing (LGOP-managed) policy and practice. While this is a necessary and understandable goal, the emphasis on participatory, bottom-up procedures does imply some important changes in governance at both national and local levels. Such change is unlikely to come about without some opposition. The CPAP process thus represents a

devolution of poverty planning in China towards a needs-based and demand-responsive approach – in contrast to the centrally controlled bureaucratic processes of the past.

The County Poverty Alleviation Planning (CPAP) Methodology

The CPAP methodology focuses on poverty reduction at the village level. Theoretical and procedural details of the CPAP approach presented here are the result of a field-tested study, jointly funded by the LGOP and the ADB over the period April 2001–October 2002. The approach aims to integrate a decentralized planning process into China's existing poverty alleviation strategy and to operationalize this shift at the local level by involving villagers in the planning of development initiatives that affect them. While this approach may be becoming commonplace in other parts of the developing world, the changes proposed must be adapted to the political, institutional and cultural contexts of China's poor rural communities.

The team responsible for the theoretical formulation and field testing of CPAP has developed CPAP on the understanding that village-focused poverty reduction planning must be firmly grounded in two key parameters. First and foremost it must serve the poor. Second, and critical to its sustainability, it must be 'do-able' and user-friendly to those organizations and officials who will be responsible for implementation. In order to maximize the impact of the methodology, significant attention has been given to how a participatory strategy for VPR can be developed without compromising the State Council's directive to minimize any disruption to the existing administrative system. The CPAP approach has been developed and tested in the field with the latter goal clearly highlighted. Hence, the field trials have included all key stakeholders, including provincial and county officials, LGOP staff, and villagers, particularly poor village women. The CPAP procedures developed are now undergoing further adaptation to situation-specific circumstances by the LGOP under its national policy framework and through its national training network.[15]

The CPAP approach: procedures and processes

The CPAP methodology is structured around three stages: poor village identification, poor village planning and county-level integration. These are discussed in detail below.

Poor village identification

A central problem to be addressed by the CPAP approach in the early stages of implementation is the leakage of resources (the diversion of resources/funds intended for poor villages or the capture of these funds by non-poor villagers). CPAP addresses this issue primarily through participatory development, testing and monitoring procedures using village-friendly poverty indicators. The

weighted participatory poverty index (PPI) incorporates the views of poor householders on the critical causes and impacts of their poverty. Seven steps are envisaged in this process of poor village identification.

Step 1: *Developing poverty indicators* The CPAP guidelines suggest that for most villages in China eight indicators (covering three critical 'types' of poverty) are sufficient to identify and differentiate the incidence of poverty across villages (see Table 10.1).[16] The guidelines propose that a participatory process involving village, township and county level stakeholders should be involved in the process to generate data on these three critical types of poverty and the eight indicators of poverty at village level.

Table 10.1 *Poverty types and indicators selected by poor villagers in China*

(I) Livelihood poverty	1	Cash flow poverty, as measured by average cash receipts per person per year
	2	Food insecurity, as measured by average grain production per person per year
	3	Poverty of daily comfort, as measured by percentage of households with poor quality housing (ie, in the pilot study areas, non-brick constructions)
(II) Infrastructure poverty	4	Drinking water poverty, as measured by percentage of households without access to potable water within critical services 1km (horizontal distance) or 1 hour (in mountainous areas)
	5	Isolation factor, as measured by percentage of natural villages with no access to an all-weather road
	6	Energy poverty, as measured by percentage of households without access to reliable electricity
(III) Human resource poverty	7	Women's health, as measured by percentage of women with health problems during the year resulting in working days lost
	8	Capacity to invest in children's education, as measured by the percentage of children dropping out of primary and middle school

It is important to note that these eight indicators are not independent or mutually exclusive in their importance as factors determining the seriousness of the poverty problem in a household or a village. The three types of poverty are discussed below in the order of importance that field testing showed to be typical across villages. Moreover, the order in which the indicators is shown is also representative of the relative importance attached to each indicator by the typical household and village. The order is important, for it underlines the ways in which poor villagers experience poverty, ranked from most important to least important. These rankings are not imposed by the researchers, but reflect the revealed priorities of poor villagers. Using a scale of 1 (least important) to 5 (most important), poor villagers were able to attach weights to each indicator and each type of poverty.

Overall, the eight indicators are consistent with received wisdom concerning what it means to be poor. However, it is a surprise to find that poor villagers clearly distinguish between income poverty, being cash-poor, and livelihood productivity. The poor give first importance to being cash-poor. This is as it should be, because there is no truer feature of poverty than that it is a condition where the poor person or the poor household has no money. Cash flow is almost everything to a poor household when it comes to household budgeting, planning and asset management. The policy implication is clear. Poor people want policy-makers and poverty reduction planners to give greater priority to increasing the access that they have to cash receipts or cash-earning opportunities. Cash for work is unequivocally preferred over food for work. Food insecurity arises not just from the inability of poor households to be self-reliant in food production, but also from the absence of cash resources to buy in the shortfall. Poor villagers are aware that cash flow and farm productivity, as two key indicators of livelihood poverty, interact. This serves to increase the importance to the poor of public assistance that will diversify their employment opportunities while also improving the productivity of farming. The third livelihood indicator concerns the quality of housing. Again, this finding is not surprising. Poverty analysts and micro-finance specialists have often found that the quality of housing is an excellent proxy for household poverty, and that investment in improved housing is among the first things that the poor do when given the opportunity to borrow.

The second most important type of poverty is infrastructure poverty, which is directly linked to access to critical livelihood services. Again, the interdependence between the indicators is important to note. Lack of access to potable water, for example, is not only important because time spent fetching water is 'dead' time, restricting the available labour power for household or farm production, but also because it bears on the level of household morbidity and capacity to save. Illness of household members from water-borne diseases is a drain on household savings and cash reserves, and increases the household dependency rate. All three compound the difficulty of escaping the mire of poverty unassisted. The isolation factor speaks to the awareness that poor villagers have of the importance of access to markets. In some instances this will be because of the need to sell some portion of livelihood production to generate cash receipts. In other instances the lack of ready access to markets seriously limits the opportunities that poor villagers have to benefit from serendipitous wage-earning opportunities. But one ought not to neglect the impact that isolation also has on the poverty of cultural outlets and the ability to engage in leisure or educational activities. Access to reliable electricity bears on this aspect of village life, too. However, the importance of energy poverty derives more from the importance of reliable electricity supply for many sorts of village-based micro-enterprises than from the contribution that electricity can make to the quality of home life, the ability to read in the evenings, and the use of electrical appliances to lighten the load of homework.

The third type of poverty, human resource poverty, comes a close third to infrastructure poverty in importance to poor villagers. However, it was a surprise to find how much importance poor villagers attach to the health of village women as an index of poverty. Development professionals may have ignored this

BOX 10.1 DEVELOPING INDICATORS IN FENGNING COUNTY, HEBEI PROVINCE[17]

In order to develop poverty indicators in Fengning County, workshops were held at three levels. The county-level workshop included the participation of officials from both provincial and county departments responsible for poverty alleviation, agriculture, forestry, water resources, health, education and communications. The moderators explained the purpose of the meeting and asked each participant to contribute to a list of the most significant factors describing the 'effects' of poverty (rather than the 'causes' of poverty). Provincial and county officials presented the indicators that they have used at provincial and county levels respectively to identify and classify poverty areas.

The workshops were also held in the three closest townships. Four representatives from county level, six from township government and 6–10 villagers, including female villagers, participated in the township-based meetings. Following the same procedure, the moderator explained the purpose of the meeting and asked all participants, particularly villagers, to list the factors that best describe the poverty that they face and the way it impacts on their lives. Participants were then asked to prioritize the indicators that were shortlisted.

The moderator summarized the result and asked villagers for final confirmation.

BOX 10.2 VILLAGE POVERTY DATA COLLECTION

The technical assistance team provided the county LGOP office with a formatted table of eight poverty indicators (drawn from the eight indicators common to all county and township meetings held with villagers) to distribute to each township, with a request that township governments invite village leaders to a meeting to discuss the indicators and the methods of collecting the data. Following this meeting, the village leaders returned to their respective villages to collect the required data. They were generally assisted by the village accountant and the leader of the village women's group. Once the baseline data had been collected, village leaders returned to the township to report their results at a workshop attended by all village leaders.

At this workshop the leaders were given the opportunity to compare, and comment upon, in a peer review manner, the data from their village and those from neighbouring villages. All the data were reviewed by a township statistician during the workshop. At the close of the workshop, a consensus had been achieved and, with some minor adjustments, the data collected were considered appropriate for use in the calculation of the village poverty indices and the ranking of villages by the incidence of poverty as measured by the weighted PPI.

key gender dimension of rural development for too long, but poor villagers are aware of the threat to household prosperity if the health of able-bodied females in the household is compromised for anything but a few days each year. Children's participation in education, however, was not seen by poor villagers as a gender issue. Rather, poor villagers lament the inability to keep all their children in school as a sign of deepening poverty and the slide into chronic poverty status for present and future generations.

Boxes 10.1 and 10.2 illustrate the process followed in the pilot testing of the procedures and the concepts involved.

BOX 10.3 DEFINITION OF POVERTY RANGE IN FENGNING COUNTY, HEBEI PROVINCE

In Fengning County representatives from all stakeholders, including poor village women, gathered in their nearest townships to participate in meetings to define the poverty range for each indicator. The deputy director of the county poverty alleviation office explained the purpose of the meeting and how the indicators were developed. He explained why each indicator should be given the range and standardized. At the request of the poverty alleviation office, each township was asked to provide an estimation of the highest and lowest figures for each indicator. These data were then listed and compiled to show the highest and lowest for each indicator. For instance, for the cash receipts indicator, the range was shown as 100–550 yuan. After defining the highest and lowest data for each indicator, the importance of each indicator was defined and prioritized through active discussion among the participants.

Step 2: *Weighting poverty indicators* The incidence of poverty is ascertained by considering the importance of each of the eight poverty indicators and the three types of poverty to which the eight apply. In this case the importance is determined by participatory means – by allowing village people to specify the weighting given to each indicator. In this way the CPAP methodology integrates the poor themselves into the process, allowing villagers, particularly poor women, to inform the process with their first-hand knowledge of poverty. The weighting consultation is done in two steps, beginning with the weighting of each of the eight indicators, followed by the weighting of the three types of poverty that these eight indicators address.

Step 3: *Identifying the range of each poverty indicator and standardization* Given the relative nature of poverty, each county must define a poverty range for use with each indicator. Relative poverty is influenced by factors such as the importance of subsistence activity, density of population, and distance of village households from townships. For example, the cash receipts indicator of poverty range may be identified as 200–1,000 yuan per person per year. This indicator is independent of the official poverty line that sets a yuan limit to per capita income, including both cash receipts and non-cash income. Each indicator is then standardized into a range from a lower limit of 1 to an upper limit of 5. The indicators making up the index provide a guide to decision-makers in assessing the priorities to be addressed.

Step 4: *Collecting village data* Data collection at village level was also carried out in a participatory manner, using well-tested rapid rural appraisal methods, cross-checked against official statistics, peer reviews and considered opinions of a village reference group, including local teachers, health workers, village officials and women's group representatives. As a further check on the veracity and credibility of the data, villagers are given the opportunity to review tabulated results for their own village and for neighbouring villages – introducing an element of 'peer group review', especially by village leaders at the township level. Data were collected from all households in the study villages to cover the major functional livelihood poverty groups in each village, including village women, seniors and landless persons.[18]

BOX 10.4 DATA COLLECTION IN HAIZIGUO VILLAGE

The village PRA meeting was held in Haiziguo village school. At least three representatives, (one female, two male) from all surrounding natural villages attended the meeting. First, a moderator[19] explained the meaning of indicators and then a representative was selected by farmers to explain the meaning of all indicators and the purpose of the proposed data collection again. All villagers were given the opportunity to ask questions. When it was clear that all the participants at the meeting understood what was required, six separate groups were formed to brainstorm among themselves. It took 20 minutes for the six groups to arrive at a consensus on the values to be put against each data category. The moderator collected the data from each group, averaged them and then presented the results to the meeting to allow individuals to validate or question individual estimates. There was lively discussion of the data by all participants. For example, when it was noted that access to electricity did not appear to be a very sensitive or useful indicator as almost all poor households were found to have electricity, the villagers objected, noting that the indicator would be more effective if it referred to 'access to a reliable supply'. The indicator was subsequently so changed. Similarly, in the case of female child education, advice from the villagers suggested that it is better to look at the school attendance of all children in the village. Gender is adequately reflected in the health status of women, as measured by the ratio between the number of illness events or visits for medical assistance by village women of twelve years or older and the total number of females 12 years and over in the village. It took around one hour for a consensus to be achieved on these and the key poverty indicators.

Step 5: *Calculating the weighted PPI*

$$PPI = [w_1(I_1.w_{11} + I_2.w_{12} + I_3.w_{13})_+ \; w_2 \; (I_4.w_{21} + I_5.w_{22} + I_6.w_{23})_+ \; w_3 \; (I_7.w_{31} + I_8.w_{32})].20$$

Where:

$I_{i=1-8}$ = eight poverty indicators
$w_1 + w_2 + w_3 = 1$ = poverty weights for livelihood, infrastructure and human resource poverty respectively; and
$w_{11} + w_{12} + w_{13} = 1$ = poverty indicator weights for livelihood poverty
$w_{21} + w_{22} + w_{23} = 1$ = poverty indicator weights for infrastructure poverty
$w_{31} + w_{32} = 1$ = poverty indicator weights for human resource poverty

The resulting PPI is a number that can be interpreted as a percentage. This is achieved by multiplying the product of the eight indicators by 20 to convert from a range of 1 to 5 to a range that tops out at 100. The higher the PPI, the more intense is the incidence of poverty. Development planners are able to disaggregate the PPI in order to assess the key sources of the poverty being measured.

Step 6: *Establishing a village typology* The PPI combines eight indicators given a weighting by the villagers. The degree of poverty is defined over a range – from the lowest to the highest PPI. Based on the degree of poverty measured by the PPI, five different categories of poor village are sufficient to classify all villages into major category groups. For instance, in Fengning County the poorest villages are those where the degree of poverty exceeds a total of 80, while the

other four categories have progressively lower scores. Villages where the incidence of poverty is found to be below an index of 10 are not considered priority villages for poverty alleviation interventions. They may, however, be villages targeted to accept household relocations from the poorest villages, especially if the poorest villages are in ecologically fragile environments relative to the least poor villages.

Step 7: *Ranking and selecting villages for poverty targeting* Several rankings can be determined using the indicators developed. An overall ranking can be made from a listing of all villages from the highest to the lowest PPI. However, rankings can also be determined according to the three critical types of poverty and the eight individual indicators. These rankings can be used by county development planners to construct typologies of village poverty and match these with appropriate poverty reduction assistance and development investments. It is critical that determination of village poverty lines (VPLs) by the county PADO is carried out with the involvement of key stakeholders because it is to be expected that different counties will have different VPLs.

Poor village planning

Once the poor village identification process is complete, the process of village poverty reduction planning can begin. There are seven steps to be completed:

Step 1: *Analysis of context (collection of village information and data)* The objective of the first step in poor village planning is to develop baseline data and establish an understanding of the most important sources and forms of poverty in each village. The information collected describes poverty, resources, problems and opportunities in each village through a simple SWOT analysis. In particular, the data cover geographic location, key resource endowments, economic development status and human resource conditions (education enrolment, hygiene conditions, medical care and facilities, and activities of community-based organizations). These data can be compiled both from official secondary sources and through consultation with relevant informants in the village reference groups (VRGs) (typical members of each VRG include teachers, health workers, village accountants, women's group leaders and farmer organization representatives).

Standard PRA methods are suited to this sort of qualitative and quantitative data collection, but the use of these techniques at the village level requires training of county and village officials. Training was therefore carried out to provide skills in semi-structured household interviewing, individual interviews, community transect walks for the purposes of resource identification, and simple economic mapping of village geography (eg, potable water sources, cultivated fields, pastoral areas and connecting roads). Trials of the CPAP approach in a range of different village contexts have shown that the village accountant and village leaders are capable of conducting this type of activity with minimal assistance and training.

Outputs of this step are threefold: a village profile, a table of village socio-economic data and a village problem tree. This information is the basis for VPR

planning and serves as a baseline for active monitoring and impact assessment by villagers and other stakeholders.

Step 2: *Classification of poverty households* The objectives of classifying the poverty of individual households are to:

- target poverty alleviation initiatives on those households with the greatest need and to ensure that poverty reduction investment decisions are made on a transparent basis;
- ensure that the identified poverty alleviation actions match the needs of specified target groups; and
- provide a specific baseline for participatory monitoring of the improvements in the quality of life (the poverty status) of groups of households in the villages.

As a part of the planning process, it is important that this classification step be carried out by a VPRG (composed of the village leader, village accountant, leader of the Women's Federation in the village, school teacher and health worker) responsible for monitoring trends in local poverty. It is the responsibility of the VPRG to consult with households concerning poverty alleviation initiatives planned, to monitor implementation procedures and to report back to county officials and village households on problems encountered, proposed solutions and progress. Members of the VPRG should be trained by the monitoring and evaluation specialist in simple monitoring processes, data collection and documentation procedures. A critical output of the VPRG's monitoring activities is the ranking of poverty levels of all households and documentation on the changes in the levels of poverty according to the eight key poverty indicators for each functional livelihood category of poor households in the village. These categories can be arranged into a poverty pyramid, by which every household is classified by the primary source of its livelihood, from the least productive to the most productive livelihood type.

The VPRG has a critical input into the ongoing process of targeting poverty at the household level. Ultimately, the goal is to ensure that poverty reduction investments identified by the VPRG are designed and resources are allocated in ways that ensure effective use and management by the village and household members. Within five years the goal is to show that the incidence of functional poverty (as shown by the number of households in each livelihood stratum of the poverty pyramid) has been reduced and the proportion of villagers above the poverty line is increasing.

Step 3: *Participatory poverty analysis* The purpose of the poverty problem analysis stage is to ensure that development planners and villagers share a common understanding of the existing poverty conditions at village level. The methodology used for the problem analysis is participatory – through village workshops and structured consultations – in order to integrate the villagers' in-depth knowledge of the constraints affecting their capacity for self-reliance and the opportunities they see as being open to them. Together, the VPRG plus county officials and technical experts from a village planning group (VPG) are expected

BOX 10.5 PROBLEM ANALYSIS IN XIAOBAZI VILLAGE

In order to conduct the problem analysis in Xiaobazi village, Xiaobazi township, Fengning County, 20 farmers gathered in the village school. They were representatives from the poor, middle-level poor and better-off in six natural villages. Township leader Mr Wang was asked to moderate the meeting, which started at 10 o'clock in the morning. Mr Wang first introduced the participants from the township and county, and invited farmers to introduce themselves. After the introductions, the participants were asked to list all problems they faced. More than 30 problems were listed on the blackboard of the school classroom. The moderator then helped the farmers reorganize these into a problem tree. Two core problems – lack of cash receipts and lack of food supply – were agreed as the critical issues. The effects of these two problems were identified and the causes of each core problem were analysed. The process took two hours.

to collaborate in the aim of more informed, productive, context-specific and effective poverty reduction investment planning and subsequent action.

The VPG conducts brainstorming sessions with villagers through which all participants are given the opportunity to describe the key characteristics of *their* poverty, and *their* understanding of the constraints and causes of *their* situation. A critical outcome of the brainstorming sessions is a problem classification summary, which the VPG presents to villagers as problems set out on pinboards, with problems and constraints classified according to different problem areas, such as 'food production', 'health', 'transport', 'environment', or 'cash flow'. The results are used by the VPG to describe a poverty-related problem tree with logical causal-sequence links.

Step 4: *Formulation of village development projects* The foundation of the CPAP process is the information and understanding arising from the VPG's brainstorming sessions with villagers and the consultations with the VPRG and technical experts. The VPG use the information gathered to formulate project-based development plans. These plans will reflect priorities determined by the weighting that villagers ascribe to the problems and constraints they face. The resulting matrix is a synthesis of the SWOT analysis results, the priority-weighted problems and opportunities, and the links between the problem tree and a corresponding solution tree.

In order to ensure a broad-based consensus on the practicality of possible problem tree and solution tree outcomes, the VPG facilitates and nurtures vigorous and inclusive discussions with villagers. The revised SWOT matrix contains priority weights for each problem area and potential counter-measures, determined by villagers. The SWOT matrix must be complemented by data gathered by the VPG on resources available for development, including labour constraints, natural resources, availability of social infrastructure and key seasonality factors relating to rural production, health status and food security.

Step 5: *Identification and involvement of beneficiaries and other stakeholders* The success of CPAP relies on several factors, not least of which is the set of participatory methods used in each stage of the planning and implementation process.

Participatory processes are necessary to ensure that all stakeholders are willing and committed partners in the interventions proposed. To ensure that this is the case, it is essential that plans made are consistent with household capacities across each poverty group. Village leaders need the assistance of county and other external officials to achieve this goal. The result will be a table of proposed interventions, presented in priority order, cross-checked against participating households (beneficiaries) and associated resource needs. This document will be a cornerstone of the final VPR development plan.

Step 6: *Identification of external supports* In most cases it is likely that some external supports will be required to maximize the potential of the CPAP methodology. These include, for instance:

- institutional support and governance reforms to enable the VPG to do its work as an integral part of Leading Group and county planning procedures;
- financial support in the form of grants and credits;
- technical support, including problem-oriented applied research to facilitate technology transfer and training;
- marketing information;
- policy support.

In Fengning County, where a case study was undertaken, the county leader called a meeting of different agencies responsible for one or more issue relating to poverty reduction. At the meeting all resources available at the county level were identified and allocations to villages mapped according to the village development plan. The meeting also presented an opportunity to define the tasks and responsibilities of different agencies in the implementation of the village development plan.

Step 7: *Formulation of village poverty reduction project action plans* Under the guidance and support of provincial, township and technical officials, the VPG (which includes the VPRG) organizes village cadres to formulate specific village plans. The planning documents produced include:

- Project action plans: including details of intervention areas, activities, budgets, target beneficiaries and key performance indicators (social, economic, institutional and environmental) for monitoring and impact assessment;
- A simple logical framework: incorporating the results of the problem tree analysis, SWOT study of village development opportunities, overall goals, sectoral objectives, poverty reduction output indicators, monitoring and evaluation tools, and policy and other support preconditions;
- A project management system: including impact-monitoring procedures and mechanisms for feedback, revision, and learning by doing.
- A village opportunity matrix, in which villagers list poverty reduction initiatives according to the degree of external assistance needed for implementation. The purpose of this step is to ensure that villagers are given permission to do what they can manage on their own, subject to conformity with

BOX 10.6 FEASIBILITY ANALYSIS IN WUYUANWAI VILLAGE, FENGNING COUNTY, HEBEI PROVINCE

Following the problem analysis and the development of solutions, the farmers in the village continued to assess the feasibility of each proposed project. The moderator listed each project proposed in the paper and explained the way in which the village would get support from the government. The proposal is considered technically feasible if the villagers can operate with their own skills or can get support from technical services; social feasibility means the project will benefit the poor; and ecological feasibility implies that the project will protect the environment. A score (1–5) was given in each category.

The farmers understood the process quickly. Each farmer marked his or her own score for each component of the feasibility analysis. It was interesting that the farmers did not like to follow another's suggestion. Instead, each liked to formulate an original vote. The whole exercise was completed in about 40 minutes. It was noticed that women were more hesitant to mark scores and tried to discuss their scores with men.

environmental concerns or other externalities better known to members of the PADO and the county planning commission (CPC).

Before final submission of VPG documents to the county PADO, a village meeting is organized to verify the relevance and feasibility of the plans proposed for submission by the VPG.

County-level integration

There are six basic principles underlying the CPAP process:

1 The process should be consistent with and workable within existing institutional structures and decision-making processes for poverty alleviation planning at the county level.
2 The process should embody a participatory approach.
3 The process should provide a comprehensive and detailed (step-wise) set of planning procedures.
4 The process should be easy to learn and use for those responsible for its implementation at village, county, township and provincial level.
5 The process should allow the county government to facilitate, not to lead. Planning should be undertaken by a VPG and associated stakeholders.
6 The process should identify a set of poverty reduction proposals based on activities that will increase the productivity of poor households and village self-reliance.

To ensure that the CPAP is effectively integrated into county-level procedures and development planning, and that the work of the VPG becomes a part of the CDP, the following six steps are recommended:

Step 1: *Classification of village projects* The projects submitted by the VPG must be classified by:

- sector (ie, basic needs, infrastructure, social services, agricultural development, etc);
- planning responsibility (ie, national, provincial, township, county or village); and
- urgency and importance identified in the planning process.

It is the role of the county to facilitate the planning activities of the VPG and village officials responsible for implementation. It is not the role of the county to set schedules or select locations for projects, or to dictate the location and form of participation. In short, it is the role of the county to ensure that the priorities determined by the VPG are adopted in the planning and implementation of projects.

Step 2: *Project standardization* The projects proposed by the VPRG need to be standardized by the county PADO according to national technical standards submitted to the planning authorities.

Step 3: *Overall beneficiary analysis* The plans proposed by each VPRG must include details of the targeted population and this information must guide the allocation of resources. At the county level, overall beneficiary targets need to be integrated so that the county can develop a clear picture of the number of households participating in selected projects, and particularly the beneficiaries of the projects.

Step 4: *County poverty alleviation resource mapping* In order to develop a realistic county poverty alleviation support plan, it is necessary for the CPC to confirm the level of finance available to implement the VPG proposals selected for implementation. These funds might be provided by the county, the LGOP, or other public sector sources, as well as by villagers themselves. County-level resource mapping provides baseline information for this purpose.

Step 5: *County poverty alleviation priority setting* It is the role of the CPC, in collaboration with the county PADO, to determine, in final form, the priorities that are attached to individual projects and programmes. In principle this process should also be as participatory as possible, but resource constraints tend to limit this to the assessment of the CPC and the county PADO (given the priorities that VPRGs and VPGs attach to their recommendations).

Step 6: *Poverty target definition, budgeting and resource allocation* It is the responsibility of the county PADO, in close collaboration with the CPC, to set the overall poverty alleviation targets for the county. These have to be consistent with the resource availability, administrative capacity, and level of financial support given to village poverty reduction interventions incorporated into the CDP.

External Constraints

Key external factors affecting the implementation of the CPAP process

It is generally thought that CPAP presents an approach to poverty alleviation very different from the conventional planning process in China. CPAP will enable the

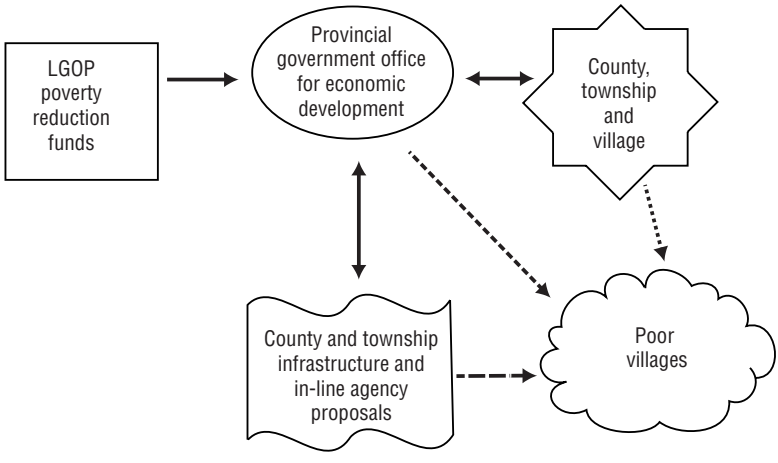


Figure 10.1 *Trickle-down poverty planning*

poor not only to offer suggestions about development interventions, but also to make final decisions about how best to build local community capacity for development. CPAP is, therefore, a stark contrast to the systems of decision-making that have characterized development planning in past decades. Consider the organizational structure shown in Figures 10.1 and 10.2.

In Figure 10.1, the village is a minor player. What little trickles down from above is limited to some employment opportunities and welfare transfers for the destitute and those hit by natural disasters. There may also be some spin-off benefits from infrastructure development, but these are typically serendipitous and rarely represent a deliberate attempt at poverty targeting. The work programme of in-line agencies is not poverty-focused, even though there are regular contacts between VC members and staff of the critical ministries (agriculture, health, education, finance, etc). Statistics collected for monitoring purposes concentrate on documentation rather than impact assessment or discrimination between who benefits, who does not and which initiatives contribute most effectively to change in the incidence of poverty.

Figure 10.2 represents an idealized schematic representation of what a shift to a participatory village poverty reduction planning process like CPAP implies. Welfare payments do not appear, as they are not an investment in sustainable poverty reduction. The links that appear are those that represent cash flows into poor villages for employment creation, plus expenditures on activities identified by the VPRG that are intended to increase the absolute level of productivity of village household livelihood activities. The local PADO shares the centre stage with the VPRG.

Figure 10.3 shows the primary external influences on CPAP. Legal arrangements are important as CPAP is directly relevant to governance issues at local, provincial and national levels. Nonetheless, one should not underestimate the importance of socio-cultural factors, the things that motivate stakeholder groups, the impact of existing policies, and public sector finance constraints.

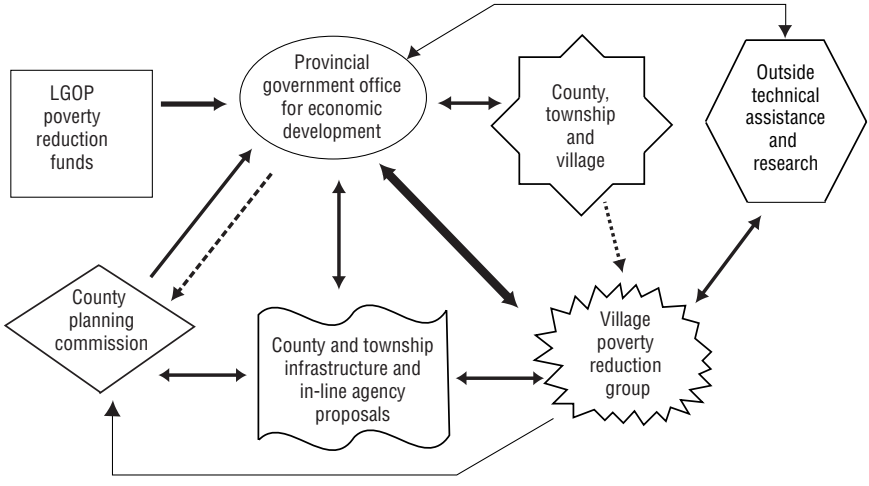


Figure 10.2 *Bottom-up CPAP participatory poverty planning*

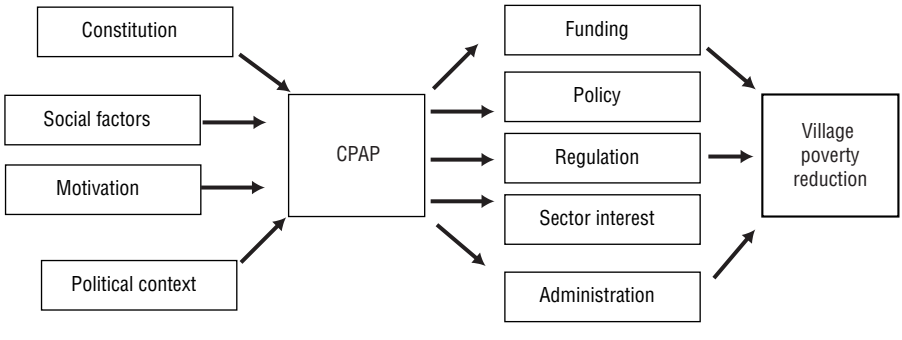


Figure 10.3 *External factors affecting the implementation of CPAP*

Central government leadership generally supports the development of the CPAP approach. The leadership of the LGOP has realized the importance of improving the quality of the poverty alleviation programme and has recognized, through a range of piloting and donor-funded testing over a decade, that the participatory approach has proved itself to be effective. It is this perceived success that has enabled the leadership to accept the participatory approach. However, this change is still limited to the concern for the outputs of the programme to ends-related objectives and does not include the means-related objectives concerned with empowerment of the rural poor. The leadership in Beijing remains cautious and still has significant concerns about the probability of civil instability that could result from additional and rapid decentralization and

BOX 10.7 FEEDBACK FROM THE FIRST NATIONAL TRAINING WORKSHOP, 2001

The first training to be organized at national level in China was conducted by the National Training Centre for Poverty Alleviation in three regional events. All key members of the LGOP administrative system (at or above county level) participated in the training and field-work. A curriculum was formulated to underpin the CPAP approach.

Feedback from the participants provides an indication of the changing attitudes of officials following the training workshop. Statements such as 'poor farmers cannot develop their plan … poor farmers cannot do what professionals do … government should still play the leading role … poor farmers' knowledge is not reliable … poor farmers do not understand development' gave way to insights such as 'poor farmers understand their own needs … local knowledge is useful … poor farmers can help identify the problem and help design the project … participation can improve the programme and project quality'.

Comments made in the panel discussions in the first training activity included the view that the CPAP is a systematic, integrated approach based on poor farmers' needs and very participatory. If it can really be applied, it will contribute more to alleviating poverty than the conventional approach. But it will be very difficult to implement it. The first issue is how to organize the farmers to develop the plan. Will farmers understand the building of a road? It is difficult to convince officials that farmers' proposals are scientific. Where is the role of government? What about funding? Do the planning commission and financial department agree with the methodology? If the central office has decided to adopt it, LGOP officials can try to make it work, but it is not certain that they can achieve what is expected.

(Information obtained from three training courses undertaken by the LGOP on CPAP during 2001).

grass-roots empowerment. Nonetheless, the greater the desire of the State Council to downsize the public sector and encourage user-pays strategies, the greater will be the resolve to decentralize and push decision-making authority to lower and lower levels.

A certain level of missionary zeal is required to ensure that the commitment to participatory approaches to development planning will be adopted through all levels of the LGOP and by cognate partners in the major ministries and finance sector agencies. The leadership of the LGOP is very aware of this need, to which end it established a special task force within its ranks. This group, dubbed the capacity-building group (CBG) for CPAP, has benefited from training activities supported by AusAID to clarify its mission, target work programme and agreed performance indicators for monitoring progress in capacity building. Within these boundaries, the LGOP has taken the lead in unfolding a series of training activities, including several PPA workshops and field visits to India, Sri Lanka and Qinghai to expose senior LGOP and collaborating agency staff to project-level experience in the use of participatory poverty alleviation (PPA) and community-based resource and activity management. These activities have been tailored to familiarize senior leaders within the LGOP system with the theoretical and technical concepts that constitute the building blocks of the CPAP approach to village poverty reduction. The long-term impact of these capacity-building

BOX 10.8 CLOSING REMARKS AFTER THE PARTICIPATORY POVERTY ALLEVIATION TRAINING, QINGHAI, 2002

'Thanks for the excellent lecture and presentation, which provided a global and domestic overview on poverty. It broke down the understanding of poverty into effects and causes. This separation enables us to focus on how to identify poverty and then how to develop an approach towards alleviation. Most importantly, we all learnt about the participatory approach to development. We usually do not trust farmers, we do not believe that farmers can undertake the task of planning, but if we really think about who is important, then we should have no difficulty in accepting participation as a methodology… I understand that participation can ensure programme quality and sustainability. As required by our central office, we will implement the CPAP approach. We shall be working for the poor, based on the needs of the poor.'

(Director-General of Provincial LGOP office).

activities is difficult to assess, but there are reasons to believe that there have been important gains in understanding and commitment to PPA and CPAP overall. It would be flying in the face of reality to pretend that bureaucratic barriers and lack of support from sceptics is no longer a problem. Acceptance of the CPAP approach depends on individuals. Senior officials with more experience of donor-funded or multilateral projects in China, plus officials with higher levels of education, seem to find it easier to put their trust in the practicality and effectiveness of participatory approaches to development planning and poverty analysis than those who have less experience and exposure. Pragmatism dictates that there will always be people who believe that consultation and participatory methods are little more than icing on the cake because, in the main, 'we' know what the poor want, what the poor need, and what the causes of poverty are. Those who express or hold this view, the greater number of whom are employed outside the LGOP in collaborating agencies such as the SDPC, ABC and the Bank of China, tend to believe that there is little to be gained from added consultation, but a lot of time, money and aggravation to be saved by leaving it out. Convincing these people of the folly of this myopic view is unfinished business.

The struggle by the LGOP to identify a methodology to underpin the State Council's call to reorient national poverty policy to the elimination of village poverty has been arduous. Complex political and process issues are involved. It is true that a significant number of LGOP and other development agency officials in China continue to believe that poor farmers are backward, ignorant, and not to be trusted with the responsibility for planning their own escape from poverty. However, the once common view that the persistence of rural poverty is the result of the poor quality of the people is being broken down, largely by the lessons that are being drawn from the increasing number of pilot projects and field experiments done in China using participatory methods since the early 1990s. Change of this sort does not come without opposition or resistance. The strength of commitment to tradition and past practices is bolstered by entrenched interests and by the beneficiaries of practices that have been in use for so long that it is hard to recognize them as examples of misused funds, corrupt practices, or cases where officials have succumbed to temptations. One should never underestimate the

power of official apprehension that the devolution of decision-making to the poor themselves – empowering farmers and poor rural women to make decisions and take responsibility for their own development – will reduce their own influence and command over public sector resources. Apathy is an important defensive response by officials reluctant to lose influence or control of the power base that CPAP requires them to transfer to village people. This response is not unique to China. Experience in participatory projects in other countries confirms that officials are very aware that the opportunities for rent seeking are greatly reduced with the introduction of CPAP-type approaches to poverty reduction. Opposition from this source is greatest when capital-intensive infrastructure works or large budget commitments are involved.

During the LGOP training workshop undertaken at the end of 2001 in Beijing, the 30 participants (all senior public sector officials from national and local provincial levels), were asked to name the factors that were the primary constraints on the implementation of the CPAP process. They ranked the key constraints as follows:

- funding and budget reforms;
- administrative structure;
- sectoral interest;
- existing regulations and procedures.

Some surprise was expressed by the workshop leaders that policy, leadership and political constraints were not included in this ranking of constraints on CPAP outreach and adoption. The participants responded that these were excluded because Beijing has directed that policy should change, which resolves any problem from this source. However, there remains the need to arrive at a consensus on the policy framework to support the participatory approach to village poverty reduction implied in the policy statements by the then-President, Jiang Zemin and other senior leaders to the national poverty alleviation conference of May 2001. China's official policy framework for rural development in general, and CPAP in particular, emphasizes the important role of farmers in decision-making processes. This is consistent with a requirement that local officials should support and provide better services for farmers' productive activities. The priorities contained in the national policy framework for rural development are thus wholly consistent with the improvements in the quality of life of the poor and increases in farm incomes that the CPAP strategy is intended to promote.

Despite the absence of a policy divide, one cannot jump to the conclusion that CPAP will automatically be embraced and enthusiastically implemented. Field testing of CPAP in Hebei, Qinghai, Gansu and elsewhere showed that the gap between policy and commitment to implementation is a big issue. Practicalities and vested interests are part of the problem: in particular, funding mechanisms need to be brought in line with the new policy to facilitate costs associated with field visits and village consultations. In the AusAID-supported Qinghai PPA workshop in November 2002, the participants unanimously noted that CPAP calls for bottom-up planning, which conflicts with a current 'planning tradition' (based on proclamations from the county, township or provincial offices where officials are located) that will be difficult to change. They also noted that the ABC

still requires collateral for loans (which limits the poor's access to funds) and that the poverty reduction grants are allocated for defined purposes (which do not allow for the participatory formulation of a village development plan). It is clear that financial sector reform will enhance the effectiveness of the CPAP strategy, but in the main the participants were agreed that the persistence of this constraint does not justify concluding that CPAP is impractical so long as financial sector reform is not forthcoming.

The administrative context

The administrative system of government in China remains structured towards centralized decision-making and control. The organizational arrangements, functions and internal relationships serve, first and foremost, to maintain bureaucratic interests. Typically, efficiency and effectiveness of programme outcomes are secondary to administrative interests strongly associated with a political context hostile to the decentralized decision-making implied by the application of the CPAP approach. Attempts by senior decision-makers in the LGOP and its partner government departments to remove existing administrative and bureaucratic obstacles by reorganizing the structure and shuffling responsibility for functions have often been unsuccessful. Persistence and commitment to change is essential if CPAP is to become the mainstream approach to poverty reduction in China.

Inter-agency cooperation, recognized as the key to effective CPAP outreach and adoption, has proved very difficult to achieve in practice. The LGOP, now ready to implement the CPAP, has been seeking the full cooperation of key partner agencies and government departments responsible for rural development and national poverty policy implementation, especially the SDPC, the ministries of Finance, Agriculture, Education and Health, research institutes with skills relevant to technology transfer and adaptation to situation-specific problems, the Bank of China, rural credit cooperatives and the ABC. At the time of writing, (early 2003) an inter-agency working group for participatory poverty alleviation, including these agencies, is under consideration. If it comes into being, it will strengthen the effectiveness of the CBG within the LGOP.

Regulations and procedures

Current regulations and procedures determining the setting of poverty reduction targets and priorities are based on serving an exclusive, top-down, government agenda. Particular attention is given by this process to local government acountability to central government directives and goals. No accountability to the needs and ambitions of poor farmers enters into the system. The poor are completely excluded from priority-setting or decision-making processes, no matter how relevant these are to their circumstances. Traditional practices ensure that poverty reduction proposals from the 'bottom' (village level) are reviewed by technical experts or representatives organized by the local LGOP office (PADO). Further comment may be sought from a local agent of the ABC, a relevant ministry official or some other bureaucrat, but at no step is it required that villagers should be consulted. At the county level, the present system for formulation of the

annual county development plan is similarly exclusive. The county LGOP office is responsible, but the steps taken to arrive at local poverty reduction goals or development plan details seldom involves participation by poor farmers, poor villagers, or key groups such as poor women.

Funding

Funding constraints and budgetary reforms are probably the most important sources of obstacles to the mainstreaming of the CPAP approach. There is no financial allocation to support proposals that are developed as a part of this process – so called 'process' projects. This means that funding for CPAP procedures and proposals is always a zero-sum-game exercise of substitution where one area or person's gain is another's loss. Moreover, proposed expenditures on individual activities can only be financed once they have been approved as consistent with the scope, standards and content required under local planning processes. Typically, the poor are asked to implement a project that has already been developed by professionals and officials, not one that they have selected and designed themselves. In contrast, the CPAP process requires that funding be made available and poor farmers be supported in carrying through proposals that arise from their own decision-making over how the funds intended for their benefit should be used. These sorts of budgetary and financial procedures constraints, which in most poor counties are enshrined in unsuitable regulations and procedures, are fundamental blockages to the simple and rapid mainstreaming of CPAP or any other participatory approach to poverty reduction.

Cultural and social constraints

The long history of feudal and centralized systems in China means that all people, poor and non-poor, urban and rural, are accustomed to being organized and directed by the government. Following government instructions is still the norm among most rural people, though the effectiveness of the deregulation associated with the responsibility system of rural resource allocation and production has given farmers a welcome degree of autonomy. Nonetheless, the pervasiveness and historical success of China's central planning system has created a widely held reverence for the top-down approach to development planning and public sector operations. The hierarchical nature of government and policy-making continues to occupy a central position in China's political and social system, substantial reform since 1978 notwithstanding. Over time the dominance of this prescriptive system of government has created a social and cultural environment and supporting pattern of attitudes that discourages participation from the bottom. Mainstreaming CPAP will, therefore, necessitate an ongoing commitment to re-education, experimentation and data generation that is meaningful and convincing to even the most sceptical.

Sector-specific vested interests

No source of opposition to the sorts of reforms implied in CPAP is more entrenched or virulent than the vested interests of critical stakeholders in

development planning, rural development or poverty reduction in China. One cannot overstate the care that one must take in considering the pros and cons of confronting the vested interests of major in-line sector-based ministries, independent government agencies responsible for priority setting and allocation of responsibility for policy implementation, or those that control the devolution of political and administrative authority to ever lower levels of local government. Nonetheless, there are reasons to believe that the central government's expressed intention to deregulate significant sectors, and to accelerate the responsiveness of the Chinese economy to competitive market forces, is generating an environment that is increasingly conducive to the mainstreaming of CPAP. An outcome of CPAP is growth in the self-reliance of village people in poor areas, which serves the desire at the centre to see less government with a decline in the need for welfare relief of the poor and savings in rural development funding through successful privatization and the improved financial viability of enterprises that generate jobs and higher incomes for the rural poor.

Deregulation, privatization, and public sector downsizing are goals that China is pursuing on a significant number of fronts. In agriculture, the government remains committed to ensuring that all Chinese households achieve sustainable levels of food security. Hence it is unlikely that the government will seek or direct the withdrawal of public sector agencies from further development of irrigation, forest development, watershed management, or environmental protection and conservation of non-renewable resources. One can expect, however, that the government will encourage farmers to take increasing responsibility for farm-level production decisions, commercial provision of agricultural extension services, privatization of post-harvest management and handling of agricultural production, and the withdrawal of the public sector from responsibility for investments in value-adding by rural industries best undertaken by profit-driven enterprises. The adoption of CPAP is consistent with each of these areas of public sector retreat from involvement in rural economic life.

There remain, however, a host of public sector involvements in rural development (especially in infrastructure development, health, education, communications and finance) where vested interests will need to be confronted if CPAP is to be successfully mainstreamed. The involvement of the SPDC and the Bank of China, for example, is essential, but thus far both of these agencies have held back from direct involvement in the pilot trials of CPAP or the CPAP workshops and training programmes that have been held since 2001. The reluctance of these two organs of government to engage with CPAP at this time is understandable. They are reluctant to cede to the LGOP tacit authority to determine their timetable for planning and financial sector reform. The policy and procedural reforms implied by CPAP bear directly on the policy domains for which the SPDC and the Bank of China are responsible.

The issues involved in reforming planning and finance sector operations are complex, in part because the implications of reform go beyond the formulation, design and administration of national or local poverty reduction policies. Deregulation of banking, for example, may be essential for the roll-out of a micro-finance programme to support CPAP, but the government is unlikely to sanction the reforms needed until the Bank of China has determined the best

manner in which to manage deregulation of rural finance so as to minimize public sector losses arising from historic commitments of the government to the ABC and rural credit cooperatives.

The SPDC is also understandably reluctant to open its doors to enable the LGOP to usurp its exclusive but key priority-setting functions in the design of annual rural development plans at county level. Currently the SPDC and the LGOP function in parallel, with the SPDC happy for the LGOP to take responsibility for all matters dealing with poverty planning and little incentive for the SPDC to integrate these goals into its broad sector and regional development planning activities. It will be some time before the SPDC embraces the notion that its role is not just to plan for growth at county and provincial levels, but also to ensure that the investment priorities it recommends will result in pro-poor growth! It will be the responsibility of the LGOP to convince the SPDC that its ability to ensure that county-level growth is pro-poor will be advanced by its full and enthusiastic involvement in CPAP. It is not clear that county-level PADOs have realized that this is a key role that they have to play in mainstreaming CPAP, though it is clear that the CBG and the senior management of the LGOP are aware of the need to educate their colleagues to take this responsibility seriously.

Relative influence of constraints

It is difficult to access evidence that enables one to speak generally about the relative importance of the different constraints that must be overcome if CPAP is to be mainstreamed. However, some anecdotal evidence drawn from the several CPAP-related workshops held during 2001 and 2002 yields helpful insights. Responses to questionnaires, break-out session discussions, and activity evaluation exercises indicate that there are likely to be differences in the importance of each type of constraint or obstacle, depending upon the level of government being considered. In particular, leadership, attitudinal constraints and political concerns have a greater influence at the local level. A summary of workshop participant responses on the relative importance of eight key constraints is provided in Table 10.2[20]

Table 10.2 *Ranking of relative influence of factors affecting the mainstreaming of CPAP (% of respondents)*

	Central level (34%)	*Provincial level (18%)*	*County level (48%)*
1 Administrative structure	1	2	2
2 Sector vested interests	1	1	1
3 Funding and budget issues	1	1	1
4 Socio-cultural issues	1	2	2
5 Regulation and procedure	2	2	2
6 Leadership	3	3	1
7 Policy framework	3	3	3
8 Political concerns	3	2	1

Table 10.2 indicates that the process of ranking the relative importance of the three most important constraints on the mainstreaming of CPAP points to eight primary areas of concern. At the top, at all levels of government, are vested interests and financial issues, including the structure and reform of agency budgets. Least influential is the policy framework, which is consistent with the notion that policy is set by the State Council and accepted by the 'system'. At the local county level, however, political and leadership issues are at ranked first. This finding is consistent with the fact that at lower levels of government, where leadership is more top-down, leaders have more control over resources and are more likely to be confronted with conflicts of interest as they are challenged to relinquish personal benefits derived from the control that they have of resources that can be used for mutual or exclusively personal use. Resistance to change is often most intense at the local government level.

It is unclear, empirically, whether the training done by the LGOP and subsequent reflection on the implementation of CPAP by participants has led to changes in these constraints or the socio-cultural environment in which the LGOP is seeking to roll out CPAP. It is clear, however, that improved capacity within the broad LGOP system to implement CPAP will gradually generate agents for change. Although the leadership can play a very important role in changing the policy and institutional setting, these same leaders are political animals and will not necessarily instigate that change unless they perceive change to be in their or their agency's best interests. The existing institutional context, in particular the organizational arrangements and cultural aspects that rule procedural and governance arrangements, is often unsupportive of the policy that is supposed to guide the poverty alleviation programme to become more demand-driven and responsive to competitive market forces. At the outset, therefore, capacity building should target those leaders whose interests are most affected by the mainstreaming of CPAP. They need to become important members of the CBG or any wider inter-agency capacity-building task force, so that their self-interests can be harnessed to bring about the necessary institutional innovation.

Capacity Constraints on the Implementation of the CPAP Process

China's formal poverty alleviation programme, discussed in the first section of this chapter, presumes that there will be significant interdepartmental cooperation. The LGOP is responsible for orchestrating the necessary level of coordination, as well as policy implementation and policy development under the authority vested in it by the State Council. The Ministry of Finance, the SDPC, the ABC and the Bank of China, each of which has representation among those who form the governing body of the LGOP, are the top bodies responsible for planning and financing issues relevant to CPAP. The bureaucratic sequence requires the LGOP office to draft a national plan for poverty reduction, which then needs to be approved by the SPDC before finally being signed by the Leading Group. It is then the role of the Ministry of Finance to release grant

funding needed to support the approved plan, and for the Agricultural Bank of China to release poverty loans for distribution to farmers and other poor villagers. These procedures articulate roles in the development planning and implementation process that are clear and well-understood by those within the system. The participatory foundations of CPAP, however, are new to all the agencies in the system. It will take time for the necessary changes to be understood and incorporated into common practice.

BOX 10.9 KNOWLEDGE OF PARTICIPATION

Informal conversation with officials of SDPC, Ministry of Finance and ABC:

Do you all know about the participatory approach? If you know about it, what do you think about its application in China? How does it affect your agency?

Reactions from the SDPC: I never heard about the concept before. I do not think my boss and colleagues know it well in my department. It seems that it is useful to poverty alleviation. Do you know where I can get some books about this approach?

Reactions from the Ministry of Finance: I have heard about the concept, but I do not know the details of the approach. We have not yet tried to use participatory approaches. I am a bit concerned how it will be done, particularly how it will be implemented through the current policy framework.

Reactions from the ABC: We have learnt about micro-finance. What is the relationship between micro-finance and participatory methods? It might be difficult to use participatory approaches in our programme.

Although a large number of staff of the LGOP have attended some form of CPAP-relevant training, workshop or conference, only a limited number of these people have become directly involved subsequently in the policy dialogue or intellectual debate on the efficacy of the methodology or lessons learned from their involvement in implementation. As a result, it is those staff members who have had some involvement in a multilaterally or bilaterally funded project based on participatory methods who have the greatest exposure to, knowledge of and ability to influence the thinking of colleagues. It is not surprising, therefore, to find that capacity building in participatory methods within the LGOP and its cooperating agencies has been closely linked to participation in donor-funded projects. Nevertheless, training opportunities arising out of the development of CPAP and LGOP's commitments to engaging its staff in training in CPAP have enhanced individual and organizational knowledge of the constituent components and skills used in participatory strategies of project planning, design, implementation and impact assessment.

Staff capacity for applying the CPAP process

Developing individual staff capacity for mainstreaming participatory processes within the LGOP and its partners in poverty reduction is essential. Individuals can be the agents for change, but skills development activities by donors –

particularly by the Ford Foundation – have demonstrated the need for significant commitment to individual capacity building by institutions if a significant shift to the widespread adoption of participatory processes is to be achieved in the near future. Shifting the current system into more participatory structures requires a change at institutional level, but improving individual capacity for engagement in participatory methods is an important and complementary part of this process.

Individual capacity can be understood in terms of attitude, knowledge and skills. Within this conceptual framework, attitude is fundamental. Attitude to participation is related to an individual's values and interests. People's knowledge and skills in relation to participation often depend on whether they are motivated to learn, which is largely associated with attitude. The 76 respondents referred to in Table 10.2 above were also asked to indicate which of the three factors that determine capacity to undertake participatory methods is most important. At central, provincial and county level, the respondents felt overwhelmingly that it is *attitude* to CPAP that is critical to its capacity for adoption. A positive attitude is essential. Second most important are the skills needed to implement a participatory activity. At the central government level, the respondents indicated that knowledge of what others are doing, lessons learned and familiarity with the literature are also important, but less so than skills or attitude. At all other levels of government, however, the importance of one's broad, general, and specific knowledge of CPAP was regarded as at least as important as the skills one has in this area. At village level, however, respondents indicated that attitude is less important than skills or one's knowledge base.[21]

Attitude towards the poor has long been the major point of contention between advocates of participatory methods and development professionals practising top-down, non-consultative approaches to poverty alleviation and development planning. It remains the case that the majority of officials in China, including those within the LGOP, but especially those located in the county-based PADO offices, believe that the poor are backward and ignorant, that because the knowledge of the poor is not well developed it is not useful, and that the poor cannot make decisions about what is in their best interests because they do not have the relevant information or the necessary know-how. Such attitudes are commonplace among public sector employees, but especially so at local government level, where a markedly negative attitude towards poor farmers and gender issues is prevalent. It is our experience, however, that exposure of public sector officials to training of the sort associated with the outreach of CPAP by the LGOP can improve attitudes and bring officials to revise the importance they attach to the involvement of poor farmers and the knowledge they can bring to improving the livelihoods of the village poor. To quote only one example, at the conclusion of a training session offered in Qinghai in 2002 a local participant stood up to recant his view at the start of the training programme, which he had expressed as follows:

> *'I do not agree that farmers can make their own plan. They do not have the knowledge of planning. They do not understand the poverty and environment. How do farmers know where to build a road? How do farmers know how to develop modern technology? I have doubts about the methodology.'*

The effective and efficient use of participatory poverty alleviation methods requires a different set of skills from those associated with conventional 'command' approaches to poverty reduction. Command methods demanded staff trained in accounting and the control of resources, plus reporting skills to account to one's superiors for the funds, personnel and other matters for which one was accountable. Under this system public sector officials became experts at couching their reports in ways that exactly matched the targets and goals set down in the instructions received from above. Participatory poverty alleviation requires a very different set of skills. Critical among these skills is an attitude base that is constructive and positive towards the poor. In addition, participatory processes require strong people skills, good communication and activity facilitation practices, the ability to negotiate outcomes, the skill to manage conflict and disagreements without alienation of either side of the issue, clear organization and planning methods, good reporting and management methods, and an in-depth understanding of how to do PPA, PRA or SWOT analysis, and how to structure and present a log-frame, and how to facilitate consensus on the content of a village 'opportunity matrix'. The application of PRA in many donor-funded projects in China has contributed significantly to building the capacity to do PRA of a growing number of people within the LGOP system, in academe, in research centres and in local government. Experience in China and many other parts of the world with PRA has demonstrated the usefulness of participation in generating a better understanding of poverty and the constraints that prevent the poor from escaping poverty or becoming more self-reliant. PRA is a natural for ensuring that development programmes are founded on data that address the problems important to the poor. Nonetheless, PRA has not been adopted by the LGOP system as the basic method for generating information, or for pro-poor development planning, project management, performance monitoring and evaluation, or impact assessment. Why this is so goes to the heart of why the history of China, the inherited commitment to a cultural milieu that is paternalistic and hierarchical, and the nervousness with which governance reforms are being driven to embrace democratic notions will also impact on the substantial resource commitments that will be needed if CPAP is to be mainstreamed in a reasonable time frame.

Concluding Comments and Observations

For those of us who have been associated with the development of CPAP or any of its constituent parts, there is a sense of excitement about what is being done, and admiration for those within the Chinese system who have had the courage to champion CPAP. If one has been engaged in PRA or other forms of participatory research for some time, there is a tendency to forget just how difficult it is for those used to working within traditional top-down command systems of governance to see what we are on about and why advocates of community-based systems of development planning and implementation are so missionary-like in their zeal for the salvation of the poor. In December 2002, a very senior provincial official from the Ministry of Finance in Yunnan, a province where more has been

done to advance the cause of participatory methods than anywhere else in China, was heard to remark to a meeting of donors and in-line ministry officials that 'participatory methods are high maintenance, and tell us little about poverty that we do not already know'. The comment caused a stir at the meeting, but left a clear signal that capacity building for participatory methods in poverty reduction is far from having realized a critical mass, even in Yunnan. Yet the comment also highlighted a very important concern of those who are yet to be convinced that the principles of subsidiarity are especially apt to the task of policy-making and priority setting for sustainable poverty reduction.

CPAP challenges the status quo by requiring that poor villagers should be made real partners in planning about their own futures. As if this challenge were not enough, CPAP also appears to profess that the poor know better than highly qualified government officials and technical experts what the likely solutions are to chronic poverty. If this is so, one can hear the sceptics say, why have they not done something about it? Why are they still poor?

Capacity building for CPAP or any other form of community-based development must address these attitudes. In so doing one must be prepared to allow local officials to engage in forms of behaviour that are consistent with their conservatism and strong need to manage the risks before them. Hence, in one village trial of CPAP, it was impressive to see poor farmers instructed by local officials on CPAP and given an opportunity to engage in a priority-setting exercise. This is an important step forward. It taught local officials that villagers are able to prioritize and weigh community interests against individual costs and benefits. In time, they will also come to see that the poor villagers have a deep appreciation of the sources of their poverty, potential solutions, and the menu of options that need ranking. However, no amount of skill development will bring local officials to be so trusting if the attitudes of officials to the poor remain paternalistic and they continue to view community-based systems as suspect because they are expensive and not productive enough to justify the effort required to use them.

Is CPAP 'high-maintenance'? In the early days of use, it is difficult to see how it cannot be. The costs of process reform, staff retaining, and the initially low administrative capacity to make the best use of the information and volunteer assistance generated by community involvement do imply high maintenance. There is every reason to believe, however, that engagement with CPAP launches participants on a steep learning curve that generates trust and a willingness to experiment. It is not unreasonable to hypothesize that, as experience with CPAP increases, the maintenance costs of the system will decline rapidly. CPAP can be expected to gradually enhance the success rate of local initiatives as higher-quality information and improved understanding of the economic constraints facing poor villagers lead to better local government policies, more profitable choices at household level and better risk management in development planning. Many sceptics will remain, however, especially among those responsible for working with the poor in agencies outside the LGOP, so long as data and case studies clearly documenting the productivity and cost-affordability of CPAP are not forthcoming. It is in the interests of the advocates of CPAP to ensure that data of this sort are not only generated but widely disseminated.

The CPAP trials in Qinghai, Hebei, Gansu, Ningxia and other provinces have demonstrated the willingness of villagers to be active stakeholders in VPR planning. Villagers are a font of key information, and they are ready and able to share their knowledge with those who seek to assist them in their desire to escape from chronic poverty. If there is a roadblock to mainstreaming CPAP, it is not the willingness or otherwise of poor villagers to become involved.

Thus far the efforts of the CPAP designers and their fellow-stakeholders in the LGOP and the donor community have focused largely on capacity building to enable the LGOP to mainstream CPAP within its own national networks in poor counties in China. This is important work, but it is not enough if CPAP is to have due impact on the incidence of village poverty. Poverty exists in environments that allow it to persist. The LGOP is aware of this and knows that in time it must devote considerable effort to bringing on-side the other key ministries and development agencies that also have a mandate for poverty reduction in China. Not least among these are the Bank of China and the multitude of agencies that it oversees and regulates, plus the national network of planning commission offices. There is a need for the LGOP to establish and nurture a high-level inter-agency CPAP capacity-building working group or committee to assist it in this task. However, the effective functioning of such a group will not be realized if its membership cannot rally around a common goal, a shared vision, and an agreed work programme. In order to establish such a group and bring it on-stream in reasonable time, the LGOP is likely to need additional assistance and resources that only the donor community can supply. Without this aid, the task will be much delayed, to the great distress of the rural poor.

In closing, it must be remarked that poverty in China is no longer a phenomenon unique to rural areas. Despite the reluctance of public authorities, including the LGOP, to acknowledge the existence of urban poverty, there is little doubt that there are today at least as many urban poor as rural poor in China. CPAP is as relevant to the analysis and understanding of poverty in urban as in rural China. To date, however, no effort has been devoted to capacity building for poverty reduction in urban China using CPAP or similar strategies. Continued neglect will merely serve to intensify the need for appropriate capacity building in the near future. Should the infrastructure-driven economic boom that urban China is currently enjoying come to a close or falter, the need will increase even more sharply.

Notes

1 The development of CPAP was supported by the ADB as TA-3610, under the able direction of David Sobel. The CPAP team members were Li Xiaoyun (team leader), Joe Remenyi (poverty specialist), Chuntai Zhang (infrastructure economist), Li Zhou (macro-economist), Liu Yonggong (PRA training specialist), Wang Sibin (development sociologist), Liu Yanli (community development specialist), Tang Li Xia (translator and PRA assistant) and Shen Yajing (translator and PRA assistant). We acknowledge the contribution that each of these colleagues has made to the development of CPAP into a practical strategy for VPR.

2 This chapter presents the main contents of the methodology, particularly the lessons learned in the context of capacity building for participatory poverty alleviation within

the LGOP system. The CPAP methodology detailed here is the primary outcome of ADB TA-3610, subsequently complemented by case studies, workshops and field trials undertaken as part of the AusAID-supported China capacity-building programme.

3 Readers are referred to the Chinese government's official white paper on rural poverty reduction: this can be accessed from the *China People's Daily* website, http://english.peopledaily.com.cn/whitepaper/home.html

4 See State Council, 2001; LGOP, 2000; LGOP, UNDP and World Bank, 2000.

5 Resettlement schemes notwithstanding.

6 Ministry of Finance, the State Development Planning Commission, People's Bank of China, Ministry of Agriculture, Agricultural Bank of China, State Bureau of Forestry, Statistics Bureau, and regional research organizations.

7 LGOP, 2000.

8 Provincial development plans were compiled by the provincial planning commission in consultation with the LGOP and the local poverty alleviation and development office (PADO).

9 Over the same period, rural off-farm employment grew by less than 5 per cent, yet the numbers employed in agriculture fell by 10 per cent. The difference can only be reconciled if one allows for significant rural–urban population drift.

10 See, LGOP, UNDP and World Bank, 2000.

11 In part because provincial authorities persisted in their support of TVEs funded from national poverty funds.

12 These bases are in provinces that harboured the industrial heart of the Maoist revolution following the long march of the 1940s.

13 Although number is the same, different locations are included in the KWC list.

14 Excluding Tibet, which has been given special treatment as a strategic autonomous region and continues to be eligible to access national poverty funding even though counties in Tibet are not included in the list of KWCs.

15 The LGOP has a training centre in Beijing responsible for national level training. This links with provincial training centres in each poor province.

16 During the exploratory study leading to the CPAP approach, a set of 41 possible poverty indicators were examined, covering five basic 'types' of poverty: environmental, resource, livelihood, institutional and socio-cultural. Field testing showed that a smaller set of eight indicators, covering three critical types of poverty, adequately identified and differentiated between villages. More is said on the PPI below.

17 ADB, 2002.

18 In some villages it is also considered important to include children in the village reference group, especially if child labour is a source of household income.

19 The classification was undertaken by the county PADO. Staff were trained to collect data from villages and process the data in the computer with the programme the TA team had developed.

20 These responses summarize the views expressed by 30 participants at the LGOP's Beijing poverty workshop in December 2001, and by 40 participants at the LGOP's Qinghai PPA workshop of September 2002. Both workshops were financially supported by AusAID as part of its commitment to capacity building for PPA and CPAP. The results suggest that the differences between different levels of government are not major. The very high ranking given to administrative structure, vested interests and funding reforms is what one would expect from respondents steeped in an ancient bureaucratic system.

21 There is no intuitive or clear reason for this difference, though it is likely that because village-level officials and residents are more likely to lack training in participatory methods or exposure to sources of knowledge, that respondents judged these more likely to be important at village level than attitude.

Part 3

Capacity Building for Enhancing Community Participation

11

Enhancing Local Government Capacity for Community Participation

Janelle Plummer and Joe Remenyi

The Capacity Challenge

Capacity building for participation at the local level of government is fraught with difficulty. Local government is chronically under-resourced, officials often lack the education, skills and experience necessary to carry out the roles defined for them under the top-down system – let alone when the task is complicated by the introduction of participatory delivery processes that they neither understand nor support. If they do understand the intent of participation, the idea of involving communities can be an anathema to those unfamiliar with the concept. Many closely guard their authority, doubt farmer contributions and, critically, work within an incentive structure that promotes adherence to top-down delivery processes. While this is all difficult to change, the capacity-building challenge is further intensified because the capacity gaps in relation to participation are not met with commensurate resources for capacity development. In China as elsewhere, there is little recognition of just how difficult this all is.

Against the tide

At the heart of the capacity problem is the recognition that community participation runs counter to a number of powerful forces that are characteristic of contemporary China: first, the tide of centralized top-down decision-making; second, the levels of technology achieved and sought in the process of economic development; and third, the urbanization and gentrification of the Chinese lifestyle and ambition. Amongst government officials specifically, the process of capacity building for community participation is hampered to a certain extent by the vision of a new China.

At the same time, many officials are burdened by the past. As discussed in the earlier chapters and illustrated in the case studies, to many government officials 'participation' still means free labour to implement supply-led projects. Communities and officials alike are unfamiliar with consultative processes or with empowering the poor to develop self-help processes and grass-roots organizations. In contrast to many other developing countries, where there may be an awareness of democratic and voluntary participatory processes, in China it does not come naturally for villagers to be proactive in telling government officials what needs to be done, what can be achieved, or what aspirations they may have. In China, the basis for participatory project development first has to remove old associations and then foster a new form of participation that responds to private (not collective) goals. The lack of capacity and reluctance of local-level officials to shift to participatory approaches is also markedly different from their capacity to make change which they see as 'progressive'. As elsewhere, the involvement of the poor differentiates it from other new processes that might upset the status quo.[1]

Some argue that capacity for community participation varies significantly at different levels of government. Experience with the CPAP initiative described in Chapter 10 and stakeholder analysis seems to suggest that ministry and provincial senior staff, with their higher levels of education and greater exposure to outside influences, exhibit a greater tendency to understand the concepts of participation. At the provincial level in Yunnan, for instance, an understanding of the gap in expertise is recognized, but the understanding and perceptions of what community participation means are progressively weaker at the lower levels of government. Concern over this lack of capacity is countered to some extent by the willingness of the provincial level of government to promote participatory approaches in a range of projects; they also display an appreciation that this approach deviates from those typically adopted in poverty alleviation projects, and that to achieve this process they, and their county-level counterparts, will require additional support and capacity building.

Yet there is an ambiguity at the higher levels of government. It is not so straightforward that we can say that all high-level officials have seen the light, allowing us to focus on the local-level implementation officials who remain unaware of the benefits of community participation. In other projects described later in this chapter, we see examples of local-level officials encountering resistance from higher (county and prefecture) officials who, they argue, are older, 'more stuck in their ways', and less keen to adopt new processes.

However while experience suggests that the government has not yet developed a widespread understanding of participatory goals and methodologies, a wealth of knowledge of participatory methods and a large pool of relevant skills exists in China. The resources in academic institutions in Beijing and the PRA network in southwest China have been in existence for more than a decade. Many of its members have accumulated experience as participants in those participatory projects now implemented or currently being undertaken in almost every province, and a strong cadre of participation advocates and researchers exists within academic and consultant circles in various centres. In this respect China has a relatively strong domestic resource base for capacity-building

initiatives. This resource base is expanded every time local people are embedded within a new participatory project.

Top-down capacity building in government for bottom-up approaches

While there is a critical need for change at the policy level to provide an enabling framework,[2] a primary and often overlooked blockage to meaningful participation in China is chronic capacity deficiency at the local level. This deficiency affects the quality of participatory endeavours and the institutionalization and replicability of the approach. If government is serious about including the poor to target interventions, and if donors are serious about their support for this, then there is an urgent need to target the local capacity problem. The case studies highlight the lack of government capacity to establish and sustain the participation of the community in development initiatives. The relationship between government agencies and the participatory approach is still emerging and to date successful efforts that involve communities have been driven by external (domestic and international) agents.

This chapter draws on the case studies and lessons learnt in the past decades to bring together what we think we know about existing constraints to capacity and capacity building in the participatory approach, especially in the area of skills, staffing policies, attitudes and organizations. Staffing, organizational and community governance issues all need to be addressed if change is to become meaningful, replicable and sustainable. For those interested in building capacity, the following section presents a framework for coming to grips with the primary constraints on the development of participation. A central part of the capacity-building strategy envisaged is targeting key decision-makers at the extremes of the government spectrum, at both national and local levels (although this chapter focuses on the local-level stakeholders).[3] This chapter also highlights the paradox that the process of building capacity in government is opposite to that of building capacity in communities: *top-down* capacity building in government is essential to take forward *bottom-up* approaches. The final section of this chapter provides some early thoughts on how local capacity building might be measured in the context of China. Measuring progress in enhancing the capacity for participatory development at the project level is problematic, but the need to confront the task is urgent if donors and their collaborators are to target funding effectively.

Developing a Strategy for Local Government Capacity Building in Participation

The development of appropriate, effective and meaningful community participation can only be achieved through a process of capacity building instigated at all levels of government, and with all stakeholders. The capacity-building process thus includes: policy-makers at national, provincial and county level; local-level officials responsible for implementation at county, township and village levels; and poor villages and households. The purpose of this chapter is to

describe the steps necessary to focus efforts on improving capacity at the implementation (local) level in order to enhance the capacity of local-level organizations and officials to promote participatory approaches. This is not to understate the importance of capacity building at the policy-making and community levels, but to take this opportunity to focus on the implementation side of the story.

Analysing capacity at the local level

Building capacity within lower levels of government to implement participatory programmes requires better understanding of capacity gaps in relation to human, institutional and financial resources. A critical first step is to carry out an analysis, the outcome of which should identify individual and organizational deficiencies. A framework for analysing existing capacity for community participation is provided in Annex A. While this is only indicative and needs tailoring to the specific context, it provides a basis for considering capacity within county, township and village bureaux and organizations. The actual capacity found in each situation is likely to focus the analysis further.

In summary, this analysis aims to describe existing capacity in relation to the following questions:

- To what extent do the current *staff skills and staffing pattern* have the capacity to promote participatory processes? How are staff skills developed and sustained?
- To what extent do prevailing *attitudes and the administrative culture* affect the capacity of the local government to promote and/or respond to participatory processes?
- To what extent do established county/township departmental *structures and systems* affect the nature and form of participation and partnership in the delivery of services?
- To what extent do existing *financial status and management* affect the nature and form of participation? What reforms are envisaged or have been undertaken to improve finances/financial management?
- To what extent does the current *leadership* have the capacity to promote the concept and implementation of participatory approaches? What influence has the leadership had on enhancing staff skills, attitudes, organizations and finances for participation?

Formulating a capacity-building strategy

Typically, a capacity-building strategy at the local level will need to address leadership, skill deficiencies and attitudinal blockages, and organizational and financial constraints.[4] Given the hierarchical systems in place, the lack of human and financial resources at the township and village levels and the inexperience of officials in facilitating farmer involvement, it is essential to establish realistic objectives for both the participatory initiative and the capacity-building process that supports it. The goal should therefore be to build contextually appropriate,

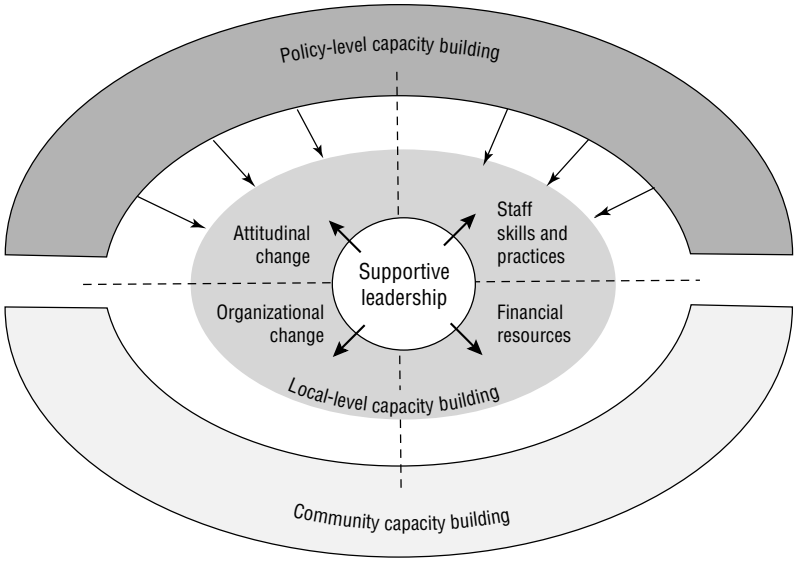


Figure 11.1 *The components of a capacity-building strategy*

effective and sustainable forms of participation and to look towards creating sustainable participatory organizations. A capacity-building strategy should recognize the need to build the foundations for participatory approaches within the constraints of existing structures and systems at the outset, to bring about substantive change over time and to create ownership of a process that develops in form and shape appropriate to the context. A primary aim is to expand institutional knowledge of the processes of participation, knowing that change takes time. The Piyuan Canal project discussed in Chapter 9 was launched within existing structures with a sceptical group of officials, but the reforms to the organizations have been significant since that time. Notably, the project opted for evolutionary rather than revolutionary change to overcome bureaucratic blockages.

Figure 11.1 illustrates the key components of a capacity-building strategy. It includes five primary components:

1 identifying and fostering supportive leadership;
2 developing a skilled, sustainable and committed staff cadre;
3 bringing about attitudinal change;
4 underpinning financial resources;
5 supporting organizational change.

These five components are intended to respond to the range of local-level constraints on community participation.

Identifying and fostering supportive leadership

Evidence suggests that in all contexts the take-up of participatory processes is dependent on competent, respected and charismatic leadership. In the right

policy environment, strong leaders committed to new processes are able to see the whole picture, direct organizational change, influence key stakeholders, promote human resource development and overcome practical blockages. They stand at the centre of the capacity-building process (see Figure 11.1).

Developing a skilled, sustainable staff cadre

The requirements of each initiative (be it a single sector such as forestry or agriculture, or multisectoral such as resettlement or poverty alleviation) are likely to vary according to the idiosyncrasies of the structures and tasks. In principle, however, the analysis should examine skills and attitudes at all levels from senior officials and middle-level management through to extension workers. It should examine the relationships between these staff members and define the lines of communication from decision-makers to those who interface with farmers and villagers. It needs to examine the key stakeholders at village level, and define the human resource, financial and organizational gaps for taking the participatory agenda forward. This analytical framework needs to be tailored to suit the specific context.

Policy and strategy formulation Skills development should focus on decision-makers at local levels (county and township governors, deputy governors, senior bureau officials (forestry, water resources, agriculture, etc) and key individuals (such as Party and Women's Federation leaders). Field-workers have limited capacity when working under unsupportive management. Conversely, managers have the capacity to influence their staff and bring about attitudinal change if they themselves have embraced participatory concepts.

Management and implementation Skills should be developed amongst all county- and township-level staff with a role in the delivery process. This will include both management and implementation staff, as well as those involved in financing. Skills development should focus on all relevant sectors and include managers and technicians involved in decision-making processes. The approach will promote exposure to participatory objectives and processes as broadly as possible across implementation staff. Middle-level management are an important channel of communication to decision-makers and feedback can become distorted if they are not familiar with the process on the ground.

Interfacing with communities Mechanisms will be established to achieve sustainable and effective interfaces between the townships, village committees, communities and households. This will be achieved by developing the skills of those officials identified to interact with communities and promote relationships and channels of communication. Effective lines of communication between villagers and key stakeholders at the 'interface' of participatory development, especially county officials, nearby township government and mainline ministries/agencies are a key aspect of the process.

Creating incentive structures Incentive structures that encourage staff to engage in participatory processes and promote learning for these processes are at the heart

of capacity building for community participation in local government in China. Ensuring that the roles of extension workers are not in conflict and removing penalties that discourage risk taking are likely to become key strategies.

Bringing about attitudinal change

Mechanisms to bring about attitudinal change are closely associated with the incentive structures that underpin staff policy. To see any progress in the near future in relation to community participation in China, where the system is currently dominated by directives and top-down processes, the change in attitudes will also need to come from the top down. Efforts to understand the basis of unfavourable attitudes and to key into specific professional and attitudinal positions are central to tailoring capacity-building strategies. Frequently this requires change to the requirements of professional bodies and higher education: technicians, for example, are unlikely to oppose participatory approaches if their university education and profession has promoted it.

Underpinning financial resources

Donor support for participatory activities, while essential, is ultimately not replicable or available to all and recent projects have proved that, at least in the short term, villagers and officials are not willing to pay for the costs of participation in financial terms (see, for example, the case of Jinping described in Chapter 5). Financial sustainability is a critical outcome of community participation, and steps to reach that position are needed until processes are institutionalized. In the long term, this requires change to rigid structures of planning and budgeting, but in the meantime interim financing arrangements are required to make progress at the local level.

Supporting organizational change

A strategic component of capacity building is organizational change. While this may take longer than developing skills it is of equal importance and underpins the sustainability of human resource development. The structural and procedural constraints on community participation identified in the analysis stage should form the basis of the change envisaged.

The elements of this strategy, the nature of staffing and organizational constraints are discussed in detail below.

Addressing Staff Capacity and Attitudes

Skills and attitudes

The following section aims to describe some of the primary skill constraints at the local levels of government. Issues of skills and attitudes have been grouped to reflect the evidence that these constraints are inextricably entwined: increased

skills invariably lead to better comprehension of the problem and more positive attitudes, and in many cases the lack of skills and knowledge is a result of negative attitudes that have hampered learning.

Extension workers and local officials

Most extension workers potentially involved in community participation in China are positioned in sectoral departments (for instance forestry, agriculture, etc) and are burdened by dual management from the county/township structure and from the hierarchy of their own line department. In the past, the emphasis has been on the skills they need to progress up the administrative ladder. In particular, they are required to exhibit advanced technical skills in their own disciplines to carry forward traditional sectoral knowledge (such as large-scale forestry production), play their role in a top-down planning process, show their competency in administrative matters and exhibit their commitment to upward reporting and fulfilling the expectations of their superiors.[5]

Their performance is judged on their ability to fulfil (clearly structured) job tasks, to implement blueprint plans and to work to pre-defined procedures and guidelines laid down by higher levels of government. The incentive structure (based on promotion and salary) is concerned with their performance in these areas as well as longevity in their posts as loyal and reliable officials. Participatory strategies, on the other hand, call on extension agents to revise their view of poor villagers and their role in technology transfer, education and resource management. Instead of dispensing advice to poor villagers (be it a directive or simply their own views on what should be done), participatory approaches require them to listen to the views of the farmers. The overwhelming majority are simply not educated to do this.

Unsurprisingly, many extension workers asked to take on participatory approaches carry with them the methods they know and pre-set views on the roles and capacities of farmers. They also harbour a view of their own positions as official representatives of government. Many see themselves as the delivery mechanisms for decisions made higher up the chain of command and they regard farmers as inferior, uneducated and passive beneficiaries of a formal delivery process. Even in those circumstances where officials have been exposed to other methods, a degree of this mentality prevails, and results in significant scepticism towards community involvement of any kind, let alone meaningful participation in decision-making processes. The case studies show that many officials prefer to lead rather than collaborate, to extrapolate from village to village rather than consider village-specific problems and solutions, and to restrict farmer contribution to the provision of labour time and payments for services received. It is hardly remarkable that this behaviour prevails; the system in which these officials function largely justifies and necessitates it.

In the context of increased farmer participation in development activities, this type of extension worker presents an enormous challenge at the project level. The emphasis on technical and administrative requirements means that officials and the organizations they represent lack skills in social or community development, have little interest and experience in generating enthusiasm within

communities, concentrate on imparting information that they believe to be relevant and important to communities and neglect the challenge of drawing-out the inherent knowledge of farmers. The participatory endeavour requires a new set of skills. Extension workers are at the front line or interface of the project and play a critical role in facilitating the participatory process. For this they require community development skills, including the ability to establish trust, and communication skills to explain and to listen, to build a rapport with community members and to create a two-way flow of information. In addition, extension workers need facilitation skills to generate enthusiasm, to promote individual contributions and to aid in collective decision-making. These people skills are especially effective in ensuring that the needed problem-solving skills are applied to the right questions, using quality information to assist communities to turn problems into solutions. In most cases the process will call on the extension agent to exercise negotiation and dispute resolution skills to enable groups with conflicting interests to work towards a consensus. Before the talking stops, there will also be pressure on the extension agent to guide the community in its effort to identify appropriate organizational frameworks for the participatory process to be user-friendly and achievable.

Predictably, local officials prefer the status quo and have little incentive to take on the additional work accompanying a participatory approach. They aim to retain their superior status as technical decision-makers and do not prioritize the development of social skill sets. Where organizations penalize failures rather than rewarding innovation or success, there is also a fear of reprisals for working with new and unconventional processes. Add to this scenario that local officials are generally under severe time pressures and are poorly paid, and the result is an environment in which it is difficult to generate participation.

The task of extension agents is further complicated when they are asked to play conflicting roles, having to develop the trust of communities at the same time as performing a top-down role such as collecting taxes or monitoring the one-child family policy. Despite the tales of overstaffing in the public sector, staff numbers are frequently inadequate for the tasks to be carried out. The division of responsibilities can be rigid and the lack of organizational coordination may often mean a repetition of tasks that adds to the potential for conflict and confusion. The task of capacity building for community-based development can rarely be divorced from the effectiveness and efficiency of local government.[6]

Management staff

Like those officials at the interface with communities, management staff also battle with their role in a top-down government system and have an individual interest in maintaining the status quo. However, these officials have the luxury of decision-making and some degree of authority. In their role as managers in the Chinese administrative system, typically they have significant control and influence over their staff. Most however, like those described in Qu County in Sichuan in Chapter 6, know little about participation in theory or practice, or about the impact of participatory projects, and have little understanding of its

management implications. As they manage finances, staffing and administrative procedures, they strongly influence the degree to which more junior extension workers can develop participatory processes.

Typically, local government managers (such as the head of the county or township forestry office) have little exposure to community participation and require external support to determine how they might shift from a top-down planning process to one where decisions are made at the grass-roots level. The change in procedures required to achieve this may be overwhelming and consequently is usually only contemplated within the comfort of a ring-fenced project. Most experience in China reveals the importance of skills development among local management staff because they sit at a point between policy and implementation. Their support is crucial to bring about attitudinal change within their departments and offices. They have the position and ability to drive this change, and to monitor its successful implementation.

For this purpose, managers need to develop a basic understanding of the principles of participation and the processes to be undertaken by their staff. They need to understand the opportunities and forms of participation, the constraints to participation, and how they can alleviate blockages within their scope of responsibility – and they need to understand the nature of the vehicles through which participation can be pursued.

Since they oversee the processes at village, county and township level, managers are key links in the way participatory plans are absorbed into county level plans and budgeting. They require the organizational skills to make this happen effectively, to ensure that bureaucratic norms do not block the initiatives, and to manage the process and secure the levels and forms of funding for participatory projects. Financing mechanisms are a particular stumbling block, as the procedures for budget allocations through the ABC are well-established and inflexible top-down processes (see Chapter 4 and discussion later in this chapter). By providing support and encouragement to extension workers, managers are able to begin the process of attitudinal and behavioural change; by focusing on the skills they need, managers can develop the appropriate skill base within the organization; and by allocating resources they can limit the disincentives to working with 'risky' participatory approaches.

There are many practical implications for managers. As elsewhere, case study experience shows that local officials may resist change if it undermines their authority, threatens to add new levels of accountability, or is likely to reveal past or ongoing diversion of resources. In China, the leakage of poverty funds to non-poor beneficiaries can be traced to corrupt practices, but not infrequently funds are 'diverted' in an effort by local officials to finance ventures in an attempt to pick winners for community benefit, rather than for personal gain.[7] Participatory methods do not remove risk, though they ought to be able to reduce it.

The means to identifying and implementing pro-poor development activities is a cooperative venture demanding skilled inputs from all stakeholders. Nowhere is this collaboration more critical than at the local interface.[8] Success is grounded in accurate problem analysis producing good quality data and detailed understanding of the key constraints that poor villagers have to overcome to escape from poverty. PRA (and other participatory tools and techniques) can play a

pivotal role in ensuring that the information analysed is of a high quality, but it is left to local government officials to assist with resource constraints and to technical advisers to work with local villagers to identify appropriate technical, institutional or human resource development innovations. The key player in this implementation process is the senior local official. The success of the implementation effort is closely linked to his or her individual capacity and the nature of the organization in question. The key to building capacity for and around these officials is to recognize the immense difficulty of the task in their terms and to understand the incentive structures which guide their actions.

Team composition

Experience has provided significant information about the range of skills needed for successful community-based development, with the implications this holds for the composition of project teams responsible for implementation. Ensuring the right skills are included in teams is a key to developing effective partnerships. In particular, it is necessary to ensure that there is a balance of technical and social skills, that they have the right language skills and knowledge of indigenous farming and forestry activities, and that they are able to add value to the involvement of farmers. The case of Da Maha in Chapter 6 illustrates the need for a broad range of skills such as information management and conflict resolution as well as specialist knowledge (in agriculture or biodiversity). This experience showed that the lack of technical knowledge on the part of the facilitator created significant blockages to involving villagers. Resolution of these matters early in the life of a participatory intervention is essential for sustainable outcomes and replicability.

Traditional 'technicians' and extension workers who have developed an awareness of the social and cultural dimension of their work often present conflicting views to communities, and impose very different approaches. For instance, some may be cognizant of the livelihoods dependent on forest management while others are concerned only with adherence to rules and the technical aspects of planting. Working together as a team for the benefit of communities is essential for sustainable outcomes and replicability of participatory processes.

There is also a need both for seniority and experience that carry authority, and for open channels of communication to decision-makers. Experience indicates that this can be problematic as those with the time often have inadequate experience and little to contribute in helping villagers to improve the productivity of their farming or the profitability of their other livelihood activities. In many of the participatory projects conducted in China to date, success can be attributed, at least in part, to the external support teams that play a key role in generating enthusiasm, linking social and technical skill sets and taking the process forward at higher levels of government. In the Cao Hai case, for instance, a critical aspect of capacity building with the community and local officials was the input from experienced and trained external facilitators (funded by a donor). There is no contradiction in realizing that the information available from farmers might be supplemented by others.[9] The identification of more productive activities and more sustainable livelihoods needs inputs not only from those with local

knowledge, but also from those with specialist expertise and knowledge not available within the local population.

The details of training processes are beyond the scope of this book, but there are a few principles that are likely to address the types of constraints outlined above. In particular, there is a marked need for both horizontal skills development, which ensures that capacity is developed in a range of disciplines, and vertical skills development, which ensures that officials at all levels, senior and junior, are included in the skills development processes. The mechanisms for promoting skills development to the lower levels of government were the subject of the CHINARR project, discussed in Chapter 7. Here the concept of 'echo training' – the training of trainers and the transfer of training know-how from a core group to other trainers, from these trainers to identified resource people, who themselves train groups, and so on – provides an indication of how the enormous task of skills development might be taken up.

The process of staff capacity building for participatory processes does not always require formal lessons in a classroom setting. Among village, township and county officials, learning by doing is a very effective strategy. The dilemma is that there are a great many officials, not all of whom can be involved in the limited number of pilot projects and field trials taking place at any one time. As a consequence, it is essential that case studies and data from field trials and pilot projects are prepared for use in local-level training (but experience suggests that few departments, ministries or sectoral agencies in China are funded to produce training materials that disseminate these experiences). Donors have played a valuable role in filling this gap, but far more support is needed in this area to ensure that the range of experience is disseminated, and that materials are made available to all.

Staff policy and practice

Skills development alone does not create an effective and functional organization. We have seen from the case studies and experience elsewhere that the development of skills through training and on-the-job learning is rarely accompanied by subsequent changes to staff policy and practice. Yet, if skills developed are to be sustained and effectively utilized, appropriate staffing policies and performance incentives are needed. The detailed case studies presented in this book provide many examples of the types of practice that constrain official capacity for community participation facilitation and involvement at the project level. These constraints can be broadly categorized into:

- roles and responsibilities;
- staffing patterns and time allocation;
- staff incentives and penalties; and
- salary remuneration and promotion.

Roles and responsibilities

One of the major problems encountered by extension workers and other local officials responsible for the facilitation of community participation is that they

are also expected to implement conventional functions, some of which undermine their community development role. These tasks may include resource management accountability, or quite unrelated but time-consuming activities such as town secretary, village accountant or cashier for an ABC-linked agency. Given the formal importance of the other tasks, their participatory objectives can easily become secondary. If local officials are accountable in some way to unsupportive higher-level officials in parallel departments or agencies, confusion in roles and responsibilities can arise, making it difficult for the local officials to manage both their own time and that of their subordinates.

In the case of Jinping, for instance, forestry extension workers were expected to collect forestry taxes and charges at the same time as working towards the development of meaningful village participation. Many were also expected to enforce the central government's birth control policy. The absolute lack of compatibility of these functions undermined all efforts. The sensitivities surrounding both taxation (see Chapter 5) and the birth control policy amongst uneducated villagers meant that efforts to develop trust were hampered from the outset. Rather than entering an open forum for discussion and participation, villagers kept away from visitors from outside the village. Further, in order to fulfil these enforcement functions, township extension workers usually rely on village leaders and Party members to assist, working closely with them and accepting their hospitality. This creates some distance between the township officials and ordinary villagers and reinforces the decision-making by the leaders without proper involvement of the community. The separation of the roles of community interface, facilitator and tax collector is an important lesson arising from the Jinping project (see Chapter 5).

Staffing patterns and time allocation

Staffing patterns, including the composition of teams and the allocation of time and numbers of staff to work with communities, will influence the efficacy of individual efforts. Inappropriate staff planning and insufficient staff mean that visits to villagers are often brief and infrequent, and that the few staff performing the role are overstretched. Staff are de-motivated and are looking for work elsewhere.

The lack of commitment by leaders is reinforced by the lack of time allocated to complete participatory activities. Chapter 5 discussed the difficulties in implementing CFA in the World Bank Forestry Development in Poor Areas project, where budgets and time were severely limited. The attempts to complete participatory assessments in 32 villages in the time allocated by the prefecture level office resulted in shortcuts which bypassed the villagers altogether. Typically this involved bringing interested stakeholders to the county office (and rarely included the poorest or even average farmers). Mostly, county officials familiar with the villages provided information from their perspective and villager leaders were invited to discuss forestry development proposals in a formal setting. The problem of scale is critical in China: the sheer numbers of villagers and populations being served by county and township offices is a particular problem that requires focused staffing policies and strategies.

Transfers and appointments Staff appointments and transfers can have a marked impact on the capacity and institutionalization of participatory approaches in government organizations. The political influence over transfers and appointments in China is a key constraint on building sustainable capacity. This politicization has led to the appointment of staff that have the right political connections but the wrong skill base, experience and attitudes to take forward the participatory agenda. This has had a significant effect at the project level and is a primary constraint on replication within the functions of line departments.

Similarly, staff with skills and experience can be transferred instantaneously if their work does not meet with the approval of powerful party members and senior officials. Transfers of proficient staff are frequent – but not for professional reasons, as many transfers are instigated with administrative and political motives. Typically, lower-level officials would not speak out without their leader's approval. It is easier and less contentious to stay within the confines of standard work procedures than to take on new systems and procedures that may challenge or have an unpredictable impact on the status quo. The manipulation of the transfer and appointment system points towards the need for management that appreciates the benefits of participation and recognizes the need for a stable and skilled workforce to take the approach forward.

Staff incentives and penalties

Typically, the emphasis of the current system in China is to penalize failures rather than to reward successes,[10] but the risks associated with any new process are obviously greater than those associated with the norm, and in relation to participation, where attitudes and policy are ambiguous, few officials mindful of their careers and status will be keen to take the added risk. Penalties are handed out by managers, and thus the degree of support from higher officials will influence the extent to which extension workers are willing to stand out on a limb. Supportive officials who champion the participatory process and establish a clear no-penalty policy, or indeed reward any attempt to foster participation, create a comfort zone within which officials can produce meaningful results.

The tendency to monitor inputs and outputs rather than outcomes creates disincentives. Projects concerned with inputs – how much labour is employed, how many holes are dug, how many trees are planted – will always produce staff incentives that differ from those that emerge when progress is monitored in terms of outcomes.[11]

Such policies send a message to all staff as to what matters and what does not. The degree to which staff feel valued by their colleagues is an important informal incentive affected by conflicting policies and practices. The forestry case provides a picture of the sort of staff that are expected to take up the participatory banner:

> *'Forestry technicians [extension workers] earn the lowest salaries among township officials and they usually occupy the worst office in the township. They have no transport and are not provided with any subsidy for travel to villages. They all seek transfers to other posts."*[12]

Salary remuneration and promotion

The concern with promotion is a central part of the Chinese government official's outlook, and is closely linked to the system of transfers, appointments and incentives discussed above. The low status and salaries of extension workers reinforces a view that their work is less important. The systems and procedures established within each of the line departments (forestry, water resources, etc) or the LGOP inherently promote a hierarchical form of management, well suited to conventional top-down forms of planning and implementation. Typically, staff performance is judged on technical achievements and reporting. These performance evaluations all have to do with procedural accountability and little to do with outcomes at the grass-roots level. The commitment and energy to spend time in villages is not recognized within the administrative set-up and is not rewarded with increased salary or promotion if performance is still judged in terms of an official's ability to work within top-down planning and reporting frameworks.

In the Sino-German Afforestation Project described in Chapter 5 the lack of any incentives for staff to take on work with communities arose as a fundamental constraint at the local level. Salary benefits, reimbursements (see the section on procedures) and promotion were all geared to staff performing in relation to conventional technical criteria and did not, therefore, encourage them to focus on or become proficient in participatory approaches to forestry management. In the forestry projects in Jiangxi and Hunan, also discussed in Chapter 5, officials were seen to focus on political achievement and promotion and effort expended in community forestry activities did not lead to this end. Because there is no evaluation of participatory inputs and skills, one of the notable problems is that there is no way of knowing who is proficient and dedicated to the process, and who is not. Unless this staff policy is revised, attempts to develop a staff skilled in participation will be inefficient and unsustainable.

Ultimately, however, many of these policies are ingrained and are a result of external rather than internal factors. Many universities in China are now teaching participatory approaches in areas such as nature reserve and forestry management, and students will come through into the work force with an attitude and educational foundation not shared by their predecessors. Vocational education and the messages from the professions to which they belong are a key aspect of building new attitudes and skills and creating positive incentive structures.

Human resource management

Another key aspect of staff effectiveness in promoting participatory processes is the approach to project management. This means not only that senior decision-making officials should be skilled and aware of the benefits of participation, but also that they need to be more accessible to junior members of staff. This idea of supportive management is somewhat at odds with the hierarchical administrative system in all line departments but it is essential for the introduction of new challenging processes. One of the reasons why extension workers need to be supported is that they are also messengers who bring higher-level officials to a better understanding of the problems encountered in the field. In other words, they are a critical feedback mechanism. Their voice must be heard by the right

people if staff policies and practices, administrative procedures and systems are to change to accommodate participatory methodologies.

In the IIRR case described in Chapter 7, Hengxian was selected because province and county were willing to test the collaborative approach and the staff involved in the project received the support they needed from the outset. This collaboration was illustrated at various stages throughout project implementation, and enabled significant change in the administration of the project.

Tailoring capacity-building efforts

Capacity building at the local level itself needs close scrutiny in responding to existing capacity and proposed roles. County staff generally have higher levels of education (although not necessarily higher levels of skills for community participation) than township government staff. Under the new State Council directives for village poverty reduction, the CPAP process is intended to result in counties having more funds, more resources and an increased stake in the successful operation of local power and decision-making structures. The supporting role of county government will be more crucial than ever before. Township levels of government may find themselves bypassed in the effort to implement outreach to poor households in official villages and hamlets, but township and provincial governments will still need to play a supporting role to ensure that participatory methodologies are operationalized in a meaningful way, as part of regional development planning. A great deal of attitudinal change will be required to achieve the level of integration of VPR planning, for instance, into complementary macro-economic management and regional development planning. At village level, the ambiguous differences between official and participant need to be better understood and strategies effected for broader participation by community members.

Relieving Financial Blockages

Few would doubt that the set of local-level reforms that are most difficult to achieve are those that require significant budgetary restructuring. Participatory methods demand financial procedures to accommodate fund flows in response to the outcomes of consultations, field visits by government officials and technical advisers, community-based monitoring and community meetings. Typically, however, local government budget categories do not include these sorts of expenditures or allow them as legitimate claims against auditable accounts. As a result, there is a significant incentive for local officials to resist on the grounds that they are not funded to undertake participatory procedures. Hitherto the donor community has stepped into the breach and provided the necessary funding in the belief that by so doing it would kick-start powerful demonstration effects. In the main, this belief has been confirmed by reforms to local resource management and budget processes by agencies associated with pilot projects, participatory natural resource management, participatory irrigation management, resettlement projects and poverty alleviation planning.

Financial status and control

The financial status of local levels of government (whether county, township, village or administrative village) will affect the steps that can be taken, the staff that can be hired and, in a vicious circle, the resources that can be attracted for co-funding. The level of funding allocated can affect local-level efforts to embark on participatory processes or can redirect funds away from target beneficiaries. In the forestry sector, financial deficits at township forestry stations and county-level forestry bureaux are severe and the effect on participatory endeavours is marked. In Jinping, for instance, financial constraints undermined the capacity of the implementing agencies to operationalize participatory objectives. The result was a shift away from poor farmers towards the wealthier village forest farms that were able to pay in advance.

In the quest for sustainable water management, the CNPAP described in Chapter 9 emphasizes the importance of resolving financial resources. The introduction of a comprehensive cost-recovery strategy enabled a degree of self-sufficiency within the confines of constrained township resources. This process had an immediate impact on the Huoshan township that was accustomed to diverting revenue received from water fees to the township's general revenues.

While the township is allowed to collect a unified tax (*xiang tongchou kuan*), in fact most finances come from the county, and as a result the county calls the tune. Higher levels of government traditionally exercise control through financial dependence. The lack of resources within local-level offices disempowers even the most willing officials. On the other hand it can and does mean that funds intended for use in participatory projects are often diverted away for use in other capital-intensive projects. While this is common elsewhere, in the context of China it creates a picture of non-accountability and reinforces the idea in villagers' minds that officials can make decisions as they please.[13]

Transparent and accountable financial management

It is not only the availability of resources that affects project development: the management of these funds is also a central issue in creating trust and accountability. A key objective of participation identified by the case study team was the need to combat corruption and to promote transparency through greater involvement by the end-users. The flipside of this objective is for local governments to develop financial management practices that lead to the financial stability needed for communities to build trust and commitment. The financial status of the implementing agency is an important key to participation, yet, as we have seen in most of the cases presented, this is normally outside the project scope and there is little impetus for financial reform except (perhaps) within the confines of the project. Notwithstanding this, effective financial management is essential to promote and sustain participatory processes.

Evidence from various cases suggests that the introduction of village elections has been an important step in better management of funds, creating more accountability and resulting in more attention being focused on the ways in which

money is actually spent. The case of Qu County in Sichuan, described in Chapter 6, draws attention to the transparent management of finances as an important precondition for both community trust and the sustainability of community involvement in other aspects of forest management.

Flexible financing procedures

In Chapter 4 we discussed the constraints on project funding and how severely the method of disbursement can affect the flow of finances needed for participation. Typically, the participatory project disperses funds slowly and later than a conventional project. Within the context of local government financing (and donor financing, as we have seen earlier) this method of spending often proves difficult to manage or accommodate. A further difficulty is that financial management processes are often rigid and fixed in procedural terms, while participatory projects require flexibility. A participatory project is a process project and should be open to change as capacity develops and community needs evolve.

Mobilizing community funds

One of the keys to provoking procedural change is the mobilization of community funding. Farmers show a great degree of reluctance when it comes to putting their own money into collaborative arrangements where they doubt the financial management and accountability of government. In some instances, as illustrated in the Piyuan Canal project described in Chapter 9, we see local agencies that have recognized the importance of their own financial stability in order to mobilize funds. With the increasing maturity of participants, and especially where they are contributing funds, farmers are able to increase the demands made on government and to act as clients rather than as passive beneficiaries.

Funds for promoting participation

Even when the funds have been budgeted, the ultimate allocation of these funds may differ from the original directives. The lack of understanding of the importance of participation, and negative attitudes amongst those who control the finances about the fundamental concept of farmers making decisions over how funds should be spent, mean that frequently funds are diverted for more tangible, visible and controllable uses. In the Sino-German afforestation projects (see Chapter 5), budgets were allocated to enable staff to visit and build the capacity of communities, and to approve the purchase of vehicles, motorcycles for extension workers, pinboards and toolkits for community workers. However, project office managers had the authority to redistribute this fund, and prioritized the purchase of vehicles over transport and other equipment needed by extension workers who would have used it to facilitate their participatory activities.

Developing Organizational Capacity

While there is some level of understanding and acceptance of the importance of staffing issues, and in particular of the need for skills in community participation, there is less recognition of the importance of organizational development, and it is given little emphasis by central and provincial agencies. None of the case studies provide exemplification of organizational change within governmental agencies. Most interventions have been pursued within the confines of a project in which the rules could be independently defined. Indeed, confronting organizational constraints appears to be an issue for the future.

The impact of administrative structures

Functional hierarchies

Top-down procedures are transmitted through and supported by administrative structures that reinforce the top-down approach to decision-making. China's hierarchical form of government, with clearly defined roles for national, provincial, county, township and village entities,[14] does this no less efficiently than similar top-down structures elsewhere. The impact of such structures on participatory processes is to marginalize the threat that they represent to the status quo. Across China's technical agencies, as elsewhere, the primary determinant of status is the allocation of funds and the ability of officials to spend signifies their administrative rank.

At the county and village levels, responsibility for determining government investment and involvement in development is led by the county planning commission. The CPC has final power to determine how the existing five-year development plan is structured, how components are prioritized, and how implementation (by each technical agency such as agriculture, forestry, water, health and education, etc) is scheduled. The Department of Finance manages the flow of funds needed to support government expenditure. It is this administrative structure that lies at the heart of organizational capacity constraints, creating a major bottleneck for participatory processes for any government agency. The key role that CPCs play in development planning, their superiority in the hierarchy over technical agencies and the procedures through which they function, distance them from the communities they serve by layers of bureaucracy. Reforming the system to make the planning process compatible with participatory development requires significant effort and persistence. Failure of almost all pilot projects and field trials of PRA, social forestry, community-managed water and irrigation projects, resettlement or other participation-based development activities to engage CPCs as participants and stakeholders is a serious deficiency needing examination.

Project management models

Typically, participatory efforts are implemented from within project units in provincial- or county-level agencies. Two administrative models are common: a

project management unit (PMU) sitting at township, provincial or national level (such as projects administered through the LGOP's foreign investment management centre and illustrated by the CNPAP); or line department cells that implement activities within the mainstream departmental functions. A specialized PMU is often preferred by the implementing agency because it provides a degree of independence. In the case of participatory processes, a PMU can enable participatory methods to be introduced, developed and fostered within a receptive environment. Senior government officials may also subscribe to this form of management structure because it is not threatening: it does not disturb the status quo within the department, but functions in parallel. Typically, the PMU model has enabled external staffing appointments to be made and foreign specialists to sit within the department without influencing mainstream policy and procedure. The advantages in the Chinese context are especially relevant in relation to piloting new approaches and methodologies without disrupting conventions.

In the case of the CNPAP in Anhui province, discussed in Chapter 9, locating the management in a separate unit (the PCMB) from the county water conservation bureau created an institutional environment promoting accountability to the communities with which it is involved. This unit not only ring-fenced management responsibilities and project decision-making but also acted as an independent accounting unit responsible for its own revenue. As such it had and still has a vested interest in providing an efficient and skilled service to the water user committees. In this case the issue of sustainability was addressed by integrating the cost of the unit into the overall cost-recovery strategy.

While the PMU model has enabled community participation to be tested and implemented in projects in many sectors over the last decade in China, and has facilitated the development of the participatory approach, it has also created perimeters around capacity development. This has meant that the approach has not been mainstreamed, it is not owned and capacity is isolated amongst those directly involved in the PMU. It has created a sub-set with the know-how and a sub-set without. In practice, the PMU model has been necessary for Chinese agencies to enter into the participatory debate and the next step is to consider administrative structures that enable broader capacity development and ensure greater sustainability amongst communities and government agencies.

Projects such as the World Bank Forestry Development in Poor Areas were, by their sheer scale, mainstreamed within host department activities. This mainstreaming typically results in increased institutionalization of processes, greater ownership and post-project sustainability. In the case illustrated, the location at the provincial level meant that the project hierarchies matched existing hierarchies. In this case, however, the main phase of the project saw dramatic reduction in the participation envisaged. Scaling up, lack of understanding and commitment to the process, financing blockages and capacity problems all contributed to the lack of interest in pursing the community forestry assessment (CFA) process – the main participatory aspect of the project design.

In the case of CPAP, where the participatory process is not ring-fenced by the project management unit, an explicit condition of government support is that it is necessary, as far as possible, to achieve villagers' involvement in the planning

process with minimum conflict and without substantial reform of existing (LGOP-managed) policy and practice (see Chapter 10).

The level of operational administration

A key influencing factor in relation to the administrative structure is where the operational management sits: whether an implementing body works from the provincial or county level. Despite the capacity problems at lower levels of government, if an implementing body is positioned at the county level, it is closer to the community and to the staff responsible for the interface with the community. In the case of the IIRR, discussed in Chapter 7, an effort was made mid-project to shift from provincial coordination to county coordination for this reason, with immediate benefits to the smoother implementation of the capacity-building programme. To some extent these benefits are countered, however, by the lower level of authority exercised by county officials over the direction and progress of the project. Following the delegation to Hengxian County, provincial-level officials, at the instruction of central government, placed the IIRR project under significant pressure by repeated and unplanned 'inspections' and requests for written reports.[15]

The CPAP project and the associated changes in national poverty policy to village poverty reduction (VPR) highlights another important shift. Inherent in the process of village-level and county-level planning envisaged is an erosion of power at provincial and then again at township levels. Bypassing the province, the approach can be expected to alter the balance of authority to favour the county, with implications (and potential resistance) that are yet to be felt. The outcome will depend upon the resolve of the State Council, the LGOP and donors to support county-based project management, control and accountability to Beijing.

At village level, the dominant institutions are the village committee, often chaired by the Party secretary, and the Women's Federation.[16] In Chapter 4 we saw that each of these institutions is structured and operated according to principles and guidelines handed down from above. The capacity of the structures and the interface with communities is critical to the way participation is perceived and adopted. Community involvement is absolutely critical to the process and reflects experience elsewhere that it is essential to work with, and not against, existing community organizations. The difference in the context of China, mentioned in Chapter 1, is the ambiguity that exists at the village level about representatives. Are these representatives part of the community (and thus a part of civil society) or are they official (and a part of the government)? The development of lower-level community-based organizations associated with functions, such as the water user groups, provides important models that accentuate the differences and draw attention to the need for forums in which ordinary farmers and villagers, women and men, can express their views.

At the same time these officials and quasi-officials are key stakeholders in the process of establishing capacity at the interface. CPAP field trials, described in Chapter 10, have confirmed the important contribution that local officials like the village accountant, the village health worker, the village teacher and regular VC members can make in facilitating the efficient and effective operation of a

VPR group in participatory poverty analysis and potential solution identification.

In addition to formal village communities, rural China is peppered with natural villages.[17] The location of many poor rural households in natural villages has important implications for the organization and management of participatory development. In the forestry sector, the township forestry station is the lowest level of forest management and often fails to connect with what is happening in the villages and the requirements of farmers.[18]

Stakeholder interests

Despite the potential gains for all local stakeholders, community participation is likely to threaten existing norms both within villages (eg, the status of village leaders and local officials, decision-making methods and rent-seeking practices) and across departments at all levels of government. At the provincial level, line departments may support participatory programmes but be peripheral to project activities, receiving little kudos and no direct funding. This undermines their interest and control. In Chapter 3 we saw how project management approaches attempt to promote the involvement and ownership of key line departments through project steering committees, but this strategy can be self-defeating. At the local level, the coordination of line departments through the county and township government bodies does not always result in an integrated effort. The varied and competing interests of different line departments frequently create blockages in decision-making.

The lack of departmental coordination is illustrated in the CHINARR project described in Chapter 7. The inability (and lack of authority) of departments to coordinate roles and responsibilities made it difficult for the project to achieve its objectives. In this case, the function of monitoring and setting standards is placed with the provincial environmental protection bureau, while the dumping of waste involved the urban construction bureau, and the collection of waste was the responsibility of the township government environmental sanitation station. Despite individual willingness, the lack of effective institutional relationships and the silo approach to their own functions blocked project progress.

Tensions between higher and lower levels of government are critical in implementing projects that challenge conventional procedures. Frequently local levels of government are consulted in project formulation, but the decision-making over scope and process has taken place at a higher, provincial level. The commitment of the lower levels of government to participatory approaches can be quite weak, requiring significant development and capacity building if not included at the outset. The forestry case draws attention to this irony, highlighting the problems created when collaborating institutions are at lower levels and are expected to follow the participatory process, while the decision-making process that has led to it has not itself been participatory.[19]

Various project preparation documents provide outlines of the differing interests of stakeholders. Most distinguish between those involved in implementation (autonomous and natural village-level stakeholders), those responsible for implementation (township, county and prefecture levels) and those involved in strategic decision-making, resource allocation, management and coordination

(provincial and national levels). They draw attention to the very different interests of organizations and officials at each level of government and, by extension, their different objectives and organizational capacity requirements.

Systems and procedures

One of the most obvious but forceful conclusions of the case studies undertaken for this research is the domination of existing administrative systems and procedures engrained in the Chinese context and the blockages that these procedures create for the development of participatory approaches at the local level. This procedural stumbling block has been referred to in passing in previous sections, most critically in relation to finances and departmental coordination. More generally, however, the institutional norm in China is for policies and directives established by the higher authorities to be passed down to lower levels of government as instructions and procedures as to how things should be done. In turn, local government officials stick to the procedures and report back to the higher-level authorities their outputs in meeting quantitative targets. Thus adhering to the status quo is easier and protects existing personal and institutional interests.

At the basis of these procedural constraints is a fundamental resistance to change, not just towards community participation but also towards effective, accountable management. There are attitudinal issues that, if allowed to come to the fore, can make procedural change in China (as elsewhere) extremely problematic. In more specific terms, burdensome and bureaucratic procedures affect participation by creating governmental bodies that shut out the community and users and make government unaccountable and inaccessible to the people. Overly bureaucratic procedures are closely linked to overly bureaucratic attitudes – attitudes that constrain attempts to create collaborative development, dampen community morale and reinforce the mistrust characteristic of relationships between government and the people.

Planning

The problem of entrenched top-down planning procedures in China is perhaps the best-understood procedural constraint on community participation. Most advocates of participation are familiar with the conventional methods of county planning and allocation of resources (see discussion below) and the massive change that a participatory approach implies. Planning for rural development activities is the result of a decentralized planning procedure at the county level carried out by the CPC and submitted to the ABC for approval – it is difficult for those close to this process to imagine it any other way.

While it is possible to see how initiatives such as the CPAP work within this framework, they also draw attention to its immovability. By its nature a rigid institutional procedure will block efforts to integrate communities (or other parties). While the CPAP strategically redefines the process of village-level planning, it also has to dovetail into the established system at the county level.[20] This means that the outcomes of the participatory process must become fixed in

order to be incorporated into county-level planning. The sheer inflexibility of the county plan stands in contrast with any effort to allow villagers to develop a voice through participatory processes and capacity building.

Yet procedural change within the project context has proved to be achievable with political and administrative will. Effective leaders who are not threatened and have the power to instigate the change are thus vital to bring about procedural reform. Visible and immediate impact is critical to its sustainability and senior officials must be able to generate buy-in amongst lower levels of staff.

With support, local-level bureaux in all sectors have been able to improve information dissemination and the transparency of their functions and create a more accountable government partner. In Qu County, procedural change at the local level was possible because it was found that the higher levels of government only established guidelines in relation to time and outputs, and did not regulate process. As a result the community and local-level project officials had the opportunity to develop a participatory approach to meet the targets. In Qu County, the definition of procedures from higher levels of government created a very rigid framework at the village and county levels, characterized by the definition of inappropriate quotas for villages. The social forestry project described in Chapter 6 was able to influence this system by formulating a participatory management plan that provided better information and by establishing better communication with the county-level decision-makers and planners. A central lesson of these efforts is that in the process of reforming procedures, government agencies need to change their roles and relationships with other actors. While this is possible within the confines of a project and a project administrative structure, there is little evidence of success in mainstreaming these changes into line departments.

The strong adherence to procedures and instructions within government at all levels has created an administrative culture that carries over even within participatory projects. The Sino-German project provides an illustration of how the participatory land-use planning guidelines developed for the project were used by local officials as a set of strict instructions. The discussion in Chapter 5 highlights the problems associated with such guidelines when they are used without grasping the spirit of participation.

Implementation

Reforming procedures and norms in implementation is difficult outside the project context. There are few procedures that allow community involvement. In the case of Jinping mentioned above, extension workers were required to work with villagers and travel long distances without any reimbursement for their travel expenses. Decisions over planting were made by villagers but proved irrelevant when seedlings were not available. (The stock of seedlings was the result of a decision made at another level at another time.) Integrating the finances of government and communities is problematic when the need for rigid budgets, defined annually, comes up against the fluid mobilization of community funds.

Administrative procedures specific to sectors such as land management, water access and financial intermediation face enormous blockages when they are not coordinated with efforts at the local level. Many such procedures are established at higher levels of government and may not be open to change at the local level. A conflict then occurs between higher- and lower-level procedures.

Procurement procedures are a primary component of implementation within projects and within government departments. Typically they are an important part of the professional responsibility of officials. Procurement provides officials with status, power and, for some, the opportunity for personal gain. The standardization of procurement procedures does little to combat corruption. Those officials disposed to informal payments are conversant with the loopholes and the local peculiarities making it possible. Needless to say, accountability to communities around the area of procurement is vital to building community trust.

Management and monitoring

Typically management procedures follow the norms of government line departments, and reporting is emphasized through performance evaluations. Donor efforts have started pushing at these boundaries. In the participatory irrigation management project in Huoshan described in Chapter 9, the project was able to develop a new set of procedures for water management specifically for the Piyuan Canal. These procedures, which provide for participatory water resource management through water user committees, operationalize recent amendments to national water law and sector-wide policy. Their development and approval by the county and county people's congress aim to institutionalize an approach that would otherwise remain project-specific.

The monitoring of results is typically based on pre-defined targets, and these targets are concerned with inputs rather than outputs (such as improved irrigation systems) or outcomes (such as increased incomes or reduced disease). Participatory monitoring procedures are not in use, and even conventional forms of monitoring are limited in resource-deficient bureaux. While it is argued in some cases (Da Maha County, for example) that the government is receptive to any solution that proves it can address endemic poverty, the degree to which this change is institutionalized is still limited both to projects and to one-off efforts to deal with specific problems.

The Broader Context of Capacity Building

While the purpose of this chapter has been to focus on and generate interest in capacity problems and actions that can be taken at the local level, there is no doubt that the broader context profoundly affects the opportunities for and the impact of capacity development at the county, township and village levels. While experience suggests that capacity building carried out at the local level can generate change at that level in a favourable policy context, the process is surrounded by and constantly confronts a number of structural blockages, some of which appear as anomalies in the context of contemporary China.

First, the Communist revolution was directed at giving the ordinary people of China an expanded role in government and control over their personal welfare. In place of the rigid hierarchy of powerful bureaucrats and élites, the revolution substituted mechanisms that brought power to the people by redistributing control over the wealth of the country to the mass of the population loyal to the Communist Party. The change that this revolution in governance brought about was stark. Private ownership was displaced by collective ownership, and decision-making on use of resources and distribution of production shifted to organs of the Party, especially locally constituted production brigades. Over time, however, the bureaucracy that serves the Communist Party system has itself become entrenched. Its mode of operation has generated a massive public sector, the primary purpose of which, as we have highlighted, is reporting on accountability, to ensure that decisions made at the highest levels of government are reflected and implemented even at the lowest levels of government.

Notwithstanding the impacts of distance and size highlighted in Chapter 1, it can be argued, too, that the capacity of local officials is a direct reflection of the hierarchy – a cadre of officials that listens to and serves political leaders first and foremost. As a consequence, the local levels of government in China have learnt to carry out their functions – including efforts aimed at improving the livelihoods of the poor – by looking to their superiors for guidance and instructions, and not to the poor themselves. This paradox is not easy to redress but is a primary blockage to involving the poor in development decision-making. As long as the public sector in China is judged against administrative and managerial performance criteria, rather than being held accountable for poverty reduction and consumption outcomes at the grass-roots level, the poor will not be empowered and will continue to be excluded from significant involvement in local-level governance.

The second institutional blockage overshadowing community-based development is the size, inefficiency and bureaucratic nature of the massive government apparatus. One of the most powerful and important steps that policy leaders can take in nurturing community participation in poverty reduction is to pass on responsibility for all those things that (non-poor and poor) communities and households can do better for themselves. In the Chinese context this is of importance to community participation because there is, ultimately, a need to recreate relationships between villagers and low-level officials.[21] At the individual level, any reorganization is a potential threat to an official's personal employment status and future prospects. Yet, if capacity building for community-based development is to succeed, it can only do so if government at the interface embraces the idea of partnership – and this means handing over some responsibility. Hence, in planning community-based capacity-building strategies, it is not enough to focus on the skills of poor villagers and middle-level operatives in the public sector, or to rely on policy rhetoric. Significant attention must also be given to the shifts necessary at higher levels of government in thinking and strategic planning. Senior decision-makers and managers in the public sector must embrace the benefits of smaller government.

Thus far, capacity-building projects in China, ostensibly because they have worked at the project level with little influence beyond project boundaries, have not focused sufficiently on organizational change. Specifically on building capacity amongst leaders to instigate the significant types of organizational change that would underpin truly participatory endeavours and reforms to local governance. Few cases, including the projects examined in this book, have focused on the need to design and carry out management training components in capacity-building programmes. Yet training from the top down is a central tenet of capacity building for participation. Experience elsewhere clearly highlights that no amount of capacity in extension workers will bring about replication and/or institutionalization of participatory processes. This will only come about with a cadre of enlightened managers able to direct strategic change in administrative functions, structures, procedures and staff skills and attitudes.

Third, an important aspect of building sustainable change is a change in attitude at the highest level. No amount of human resource development in the skills needed to facilitate and implement community-based project design and implementation at the local level can be effectively or optimally utilized unless its use in community-based development is authorized from above. Committed village, county, township and provincial officials can make some progress on a small scale but they are not in a position to embrace and implement the hundreds of administrative and process reforms needed to facilitate community-based project activities without supporting budgetary and legal reforms. As mentioned in the preceding section, authority for reforms to public sector spending, revenue raising and related responsibilities must come from above and they are essential to the long-term sustainability of participatory activity.

A fourth issue concerns the implications for official work loads of a shift from top-down management and administration to bottom-up management and administration. The overwhelming perception among officials in China, and especially among the senior ranks, is that participatory methodologies of planning, project design, activity implementation, performance monitoring, and impact assessment are more labour-intensive than command systems based on directives issued by official government employees. This perception is correct in so far as trust building, PRA, associated participatory poverty analysis exercises and facilitation of community organizational innovation are time-consuming tasks. It is incorrect, however, in that once these tasks are undertaken successfully, the time demands of programme maintenance and liaison with village leaders and representatives are much less demanding. Successful implementation of participatory projects devolves substantial responsibility for project cycle activities to project stakeholders, especially villagers themselves. As a result, in the longer term the demands of community-based development ought to change the nature of the work that officials undertake, relieving them of the need to attend to many time-consuming responsibilities.

In time, therefore, the shift to community-based development ought to facilitate the move to more efficient, smaller government and allow local authorities to capitalize on staff attrition to downsize and realize significant efficiency gains. In this sense the devolution of decision-making authority to

lower levels is in the interest of those who support a contraction in the role of government in favour of consumer-driven and user-pays policy frameworks.

Coordinating Capacity Building

The discussion above sets out a number of the structural changes necessary for the long-term institutionalization of the community role in local governance. In addition, the earlier sections of Chapter 4 have outlined the primary legal and administrative constraints to the successful implementation of participatory approaches. Addressing these legal, administrative, policy (and political) blockages is vital for local-level capacity-building efforts. More specific efforts in relation to training, reporting systems and procedures are also essential, especially where coordination is required by higher levels of government to create an 'encouraging' as opposed to an 'enabling' environment for capacity building.

Recently the process of preparation and reflection on capacity building for the county-level poverty alleviation planning approach has drawn attention not only to the compartmentalization of government and its impacts on poverty reduction planning but also to the compartmentalization and fragmentation of human resource development within the government, and its corresponding impacts on capacity. Almost every government department, ministry or development agency has its own training branch or section. As yet, few of these have coordinated their training programmes or ensured any complementarity. Typically, the training branch of the LGOP and the training sections of the major in-line ministries (agriculture, education, finance, forestry, health, infrastructure, water, etc) operate independently, as do the training arms of China's development planning commission, central bank, academies of science and social science, and mass organizations representing women, youth and other key community groups. In the past these training arms supported their respective institutions, they were not concerned specifically with tailoring training to converge with emerging policies or each other. To improve efficiency and outcomes, greater convergence of staff capacity building and cross-sectoral linkages are required. Coordination on this level is rare in China, yet the potential benefits, including cost reductions, of ensuring inter-agency coordination are substantial.

China is one of the few countries in the world with a dedicated institutional home for poverty reduction. The LGOP, responsible for all aspects of national poverty policy, has a complex mandate and inter-agency coordination is core business. Nonetheless, the LGOP has not, to date, applied this mandate to inter-agency coordination of capacity building for participatory approaches at the county and village level. Most case studies and pilot projects clearly point to a set of practices that leave the bulk of the capacity-building burden on the LGOP, even where the staff of cooperating stakeholders are beneficiaries of the training offered to pilot project staff and other participants, or are graduates of the LGOP's ongoing commitment to human resource development.

Measuring Capacity Development

When designed to meet specific contextual needs, each of the components of the capacity-building strategy will be outlined in terms of activities and tasks. Typically and perhaps ironically, this process is measured by inputs (number and cost of visits, number of training sessions, etc) or outputs (number of people trained, number of procedures amended). Yet in order to consider the impact of this individual and organizational capacity building on poor villagers, it is necessary to measure the outcomes – the impact of the training, staff policies, financial mechanisms and organizational changes that take place to facilitate the capacity of local people to do it for themselves.

In attempting to measure capacity for participatory development at the local level it is crucial to recognize that perspective counts. Measuring trends in capacity for participatory development should itself be a participatory exercise. Local villagers have a perspective and have views on their own capacity in managing, planning and administering local assets and resources. They also have a perspective on the capacity of local government agents as partners assisting them in this process. Similarly, local government officials have a perspective on these issues, one that will not only reflect attitudes favourable or otherwise to participatory strategies, but also provide considered assessments of what is needed to ensure that local villagers can be successful as project or project-component managers.

Measuring progress in capacity building in any area presents a practical challenge. Given the limited experience generally in relation to measuring capacity building for community participation, the following discussion aims, first and foremost, to explore how this might be done, what approaches might be taken, and what outcomes may act as indicators. It is presented here for discussion and debate.

Potential indicators of capacity development

In measuring capacity-building processes for community participation, it is necessary to recognize that community participation is a part of a general shift in governance at village level. Hence, when we seek to measure existing or future trends in capacity for community participation, we could do so by identifying the roles that are given to the poor and measuring the importance of these roles to the outcomes sought. Presumably what we would look for is a close link between what is identified as a cause of poverty and the participatory methods needed for an effective solution.

Another approach might be to begin from the constraints that are preventing poor people from taking greater responsibility for the implementation of development planning and externally funded project-based interventions. If we take this approach, the dilemma we face is to decide where to begin. Which of the many constraints – inappropriate attitudes, hierarchical systems, absence of facilitation and community-based management skills, contrary incentive structures, under-resourced project design – is the most critical? Who should determine their relative importance? Is the answer the same whether one is

concerned with integration of indigenous knowledge into problem analysis and project design, or devolving project implementation management to local communities? It may well be pragmatic to conclude that where potential beneficiaries have been involved previously in projects using participatory methods, this experience provides a source of benchmarks against which other villages can be compared.

In China there are few cases where participatory methods in development have been adopted without the active support of government. Capacity for participatory methods is enhanced by the degree to which local government reform has progressed. It is appropriate, therefore, that our efforts to measure capacity building for participatory development should focus close attention on the inclusiveness of local governance arrangements, including gender dimensions, and the clarity with which the accountability of 'government' can be distinguished from the beneficiaries of public support for township and village enterprises, social services, welfare payments and local government employment. A critical question in this regard may be to know what contribution poor villagers make to local government affairs. Is it labour? Management? Or ideas for local village development?

The rhetoric of participatory development often includes references to the need to nurture a sense of 'ownership' of the process and associated intervention activities. It may be possible, therefore, to measure capacity building by assessing the degree of ownership that villagers are able to exercise. Villagers are alienated from the process if the opportunity cost of participation is high and unrecompensed. Similarly, no amount of ownership is possible if the proposed solution to chronic poverty is beyond the skills and ability of villagers to implement and maintain it. Human capital constraints may exist that stand in the way of effective technology transfer, limiting the pace of innovation and imitation. Alternatively, a real sense of ownership may elude villagers because they remain unaware of the responsibilities that they can assume and the entitlements that they can insist upon. It is rare that participatory projects examine such matters, yet to do so ought to reveal a lot about local capacity to assume responsibility for development projects.

Local human capital constraints are often the first obstacle that has to be overcome before institutional innovations, organizational development or local appointments to management roles can be effected. Among the human capital skills needed are minimum literacy and numeracy, the lack of which may require significant mentoring by local government officials. Even where these skills are available, which they are in most village communities, genuine capacity building may await the completion of awareness raising and strategic management training to ensure that project goals, values, key outcomes and documentation procedures are understood and embraced. Local government-based project facilitators may need to be taught how to work with communities to achieve these results, to which end they will have first-class technical knowledge of the particular sector in which they are working. The existence of quality documentation of training provided to villagers and local government officials should be read as indicative of significant capacity for the replication of participatory methods.

The case studies presented in this book reveal seven forms of participation that can be observed in village China. The seven types of participation are indicative of local capacities to implement participatory approaches in development. The implication is that villages where participation is forced also have the least capacity, while communities where self-managed, voluntary participation is operative have the greatest capacity. In between these extremes, the level of local capacity for participatory methods increases as avenues open up for involvement through attendance at meetings, for the expression of opinions and the discussion of key issues, and for individual responsibility in decision-making forums. One can imagine that an index of capacity could be constructed on the basis of these forms of participation, with weights attached to each type as determined by villager feedback. The right form of participation is the one the community and householders identify as meeting their needs – it is not necessarily the highest rung on the participation ladder.

It is important to recognize that an index of capacity will refer to a point in time. An index of trends in capacity to implement participatory projects is likely to be a different construct. Trend measurement is likely to give greater weight to ways in which community understanding of the philosophical and practical foundations of participation change over time. Measuring trends is also likely to require information on the extent to which community members appreciate the importance of achieving sustainable improvements, the accountability requirement they have to meet to justify continuing support from external sources, and the steps taken to build support within the community to maintain high levels of attendance at key meetings and strategic contributions to management committees, progress monitoring and quality documentation.

Another approach to the measurement of local capacity and capacity building is to search for a critical area of local organization where identifiable forms of change are reliable proxies for either the level, or changes in the level, of capacity for participatory development. One of these critical areas is the role played by women in development The level of attention given in the village to women's interests, women's health, and women's involvement in important decision-making areas tends to be indicative of the local capacity for participatory development.

In summary, this analysis argues that measuring capacity and trends in capacity building is not easy; neither is it necessarily to be done in one way and one way only. Nonetheless, it seems reasonable to observe that measurement can relate to the five components of capacity building.

Staff skills and staffing policies

In order to assess capacity, is it important to know if staff have the attitudes and skills to promote participatory processes? How are staff skills developed and sustained? Some key capacity indicators are:

- proportion of government staff who have been trained or involved in the use of PRA;

- proportion of government staff who have community facilitation skills and experience;
- proportion of the recurrent PADO and key partner agency's budget allocated to field travel and fieldwork support;
- number of existing community development projects using participatory methods;
- number of days of government-sponsored training exercises dealing with community-directed and managed development;
- proportion of government sector stakeholder staff engaged in the above activities who are female;
- number of trained staff transferred out of participatory projects;
- number of projects measured by outcomes rather than inputs.

Attitudes and administrative culture

To what extent do attitudes and the ruling administrative culture affect the willingness and enthusiasm of local government officials to promote or respond to participatory processes? Key capacity indicators are:

- involvement of villagers in the collection and assessment of poverty incidence and problem analysis data;
- role in community development project management played by villagers other than VC members;
- proportion of literate adult females to males in the target village or county;
- number of actions based on community feedback and the views of villagers.

Administrative structures and systems

To what extent do established county/township departmental and local government procedures affect the nature and form of participation and partnership in the delivery of services? Key capacity indicators are:

- number of regular community consultation sessions that are integral to local government operations;
- number of ways local government is accountable to villagers;
- revenue raised from user-pays fees for local government services as a proportion of the cost of local government;
- turnover in membership of the VC;
- number of projects shifting from PMUs into line department functions;
- number of initiatives that have adapted programmes/inputs to meet community demands.

Financial status and management

To what extent do existing financial and administrative arrangements affect the nature and form of participation? What reforms are envisaged or have been undertaken to improve finances/financial management? Key capacity indicators are:

- number of active windows for cash injection into poor village households;
- number of villagers able to undertake the role of project/activity/group book-keeper;
- proportion of project budget managed and accounted for by villagers;
- proportion of household tax paid/collected in cash;
- cash distributions from all sources, including production loans and welfare payments;
- proportion of villagers willing to provide matching funding.

Leadership

To what extent does the leadership promote the implementation of participatory approaches? What influence has the leadership had on enhancing staff skills, attitudes, organizations and finances for participation? Key capacity indicators might be:

- number of procedural changes made to facilitate or improve project processes;
- number of meetings and direct contributions;
- number of interactions with field-workers and interface staff;
- number of interactions with middle management and efforts to generate a skilled cadre.

In the end, then, we are left with a series of important questions that will always lie behind what must be done to ensure effective participatory development. Quite unsurprisingly, these questions mirror the stages in the project cycle. Namely:

- Who does the problem identification? Can they do it well? With what authority?
- Who does the planning? Can they do it well? With what authority?
- Who does the design? Can they do it well? With what authority?
- Who does the implementation? Can they do it well? With what authority?
- Who manages? Can they do it well? With what authority?
- Who finances the capacity-building inputs? Can they do it well? With what authority?
- Who monitors? Can they do it well? With what authority?
- Who evaluates? Can they do it well? With what authority?
- Who does strategic planning? Can they do it well? With what authority?
- Who owns the project? With what authority?

Conclusion

The lack of capacity of local government stands as a primary constraint on the effective introduction and replication of participatory approaches in China. This lack of capacity takes various skill and organizational forms as described, many of which can be addressed at the local level and many of which require committed support from above. Without a commitment to capacity building at

the local level that is commensurate with the scale of the problem to be addressed, community participation will remain the concern of isolated projects, confined within project cocoons. For any significant metamorphosis to take place, support for community participation and the necessary capacity development needs to come from the top and, at least at the outset, to be enshrined in the directives of the top-down system. Capacity building for community participation at the local level will only come about by working with the existing system, and that means developing an imposing cadre of committed leaders willing and able to communicate to progressively lower levels of government the importance of involving poor communities in their own development.

Notes

1 There is less resistance to the introduction of ICT, for instance, despite it being an entirely new process requiring attitudinal change and upsetting the status quo. See also discussion in Chapter 5 of this reluctance in relation to forestry officials seeking technological solutions to development. For a more detailed discussion of the bias against the poor and how it affects capacity building for community participation generally, see Plummer, 2000, p113.
2 The key blockages in the external operating context are discussed in Chapter 4, and are reflected on in relation to capacity development later in this chapter.
3 See, for instance, the work carried out with the support of the ADB and AusAID in capacity building at the national level, eg, ADB, 2000 and ADB, 2002.
4 Legal constraints undoubtedly exist, but bringing about change to laws is rarely within the authority of local-level officials. These are discussed as external constraints in Chapter 4.
5 See for instance the role of forestry extension workers described in Chapter 5.
6 It is for this reason that participatory projects almost always involve institutional innovations that move local communities down the path to popular representation and management systems accountable to the target community.
7 China has many loss-making township and village enterprises (TVEs) that fall into this category, supported at the expense of poor villagers who failed to see the resources intended for their use. Participatory mechanisms can stem the flow of funds into TVEs, but this does not guarantee that the application of these funds will be more commercially successful.
8 The interface between farmers and officials is discussed in Chapter 4.
9 Even where local government finances have been reformed to embrace field visits, community involvement in project governance, and PRA for ongoing monitoring or replication activities, the ability to fund visitors and disseminate information on project outcomes is limited by the fact that such activities are not normally seen as within the mandate of local government. Lead national institutions such as the LGOP can undertake an educational role of this nature, but the pace of progress and reform is greatly assisted if external financial support is available.
10 See particularly the discussion on the lack of staff incentives in relation to the forestry sector in Chapter 5.
11 See the procedures discussion later in this chapter.
12 Liu Jinlong et al, 2002, p22.
13 In Jinping, funds were diverted for 6–12 months before being used on the intended project. Liu Jinlong et al, 2002, p20.

14 These are unambiguously levels of government with ever-diminishing authority. This is very different to the context in which community participation was introduced into South Africa, for instance, where the national, provincial and local governments are referred to as 'spheres' of government to remove the connotations of this hierarchy.
15 These visits and the reports requisitioned followed no pre-planned or agreed timetable.
16 There may also exist a Youth Federation, a first-aid and community health centre staffed by a resident or a visiting health worker (typically a minimally trained barefoot doctor, nurse, or sanitation and hygiene officer), plus, if the village is large enough, a primary school.
17 All natural villages will be attached for political and administrative purposes to an administrative village, from where the VC and other village institutions operate. Every administrative village has a clutch of natural villages associated with it, the number varying widely from a few to a high of a dozen or more.
18 Lai Qingkui, undated, p13.
19 Liu Jinlong et al, 2002, p32.
20 The process has to be consistent with and workable within existing institutional structures and decision-making processes for poverty alleviation at the county level. See LGOP/ADB, 2002.
21 The long-term implication of this is a significant reduction in the size of the public sector.

Annex

Analysis of Existing Capacity

Here we examine the internal workings of the government institutions responsible for implementing projects, specifically how they have adapted to take on board community participation. We consider the areas of finance, structures, systems and procedures, attitudes and human resources.

STAFF CAPACITY	
To what extent do the current staff, skills and staffing pattern have the capacity to promote or respond to participatory processes?	• What are the roles to be played by the various officials and what skills are needed to fulfil these roles? • What are the skills of senior officials and Party members, technical staff, village committees, village leaders, Women's Federation, and others in the project/locality? • What are the gaps between existing skills and those needed? • Is there depth in the capacity to perform the roles?
How are staff skills developed and sustained?	• Are there staff charged with the responsibility for responding to or promoting participation? • What is their status and how does this relate to other staff? • Are there any skills development opportunities available? • What allowance is made for staff training? How is this funded? • What impact has training had on the capacity to implement participatory projects? • What staff policies affect participation? Staff appointment and transfer system, eg? Who is responsible for appointment and rotation? What is the impact of political appointments on participatory initiatives?

- Are staff all employed on a similar basis? Staff on deputation or contract, eg? May their status affect how effectively they can carry out their allocated role? Are project staff employed on a sustainable basis?
- What are the financial and decision-making powers of the staff and how do these affect their ability to implement participatory development?
- How is the performance of staff judged? How will this affect participation? Are there any incentives for staff to respond to participation?
- Has the county/township implemented any internal reforms to established staffing policy that have improved its capacity for community participation in the delivery of services?

To what extent do prevailing attitudes and administrative culture affect the capacity of the local government to promote or respond to participatory processes?

- Has the county/township attempted to change attitudes/organizational behaviour and to build a culture which promotes community participation?
- What is the attitude towards the participation of the community? Does it vary at different levels of management and staff? Is it possible to identify the sources of this attitude? What is the attitude of senior management to participation?
- What is the attitude towards the poor as decision-makers?
- What is the attitude to poor communities carrying out implementation phases of infrastructure works?
- What is the attitude towards participation of women's community groups?
- Has the project been led by a key individual?
- If so, are the attitudes institutionalized and sustainable?
- What is the nature of this leadership?

FINANCIAL CAPACITY

To what extent does financing affect the nature and form of participation?

- What is the financial status of the county/township?
- What are the resource constraints/what is the financial capacity of the county/township to deliver services to the poor?

What reforms are envisaged or have been undertaken to improve finances/financial management?

- What are the income/expenditure trends?
- Has the township or county coordinated funding successfully?
- Have these efforts been responsive to the needs of the poor and involved the poor as a part of the process?
- Transparency and accountability?
- Is there a correlation between financial constraints and the county/township willingness to embrace community participation?
- What is the county/township position on cost recovery?
- Has the county/township demonstrated its ability to take on the financing of contracts in partnership with the community?
- Has it instigated any reforms in financial management? In systems for payment and approvals?

ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY	
To what extent do established county/township departmental structures affect the nature and form of participation and partnership in the delivery of services?	• What are the primary organizational issues affecting participatory projects? • What consideration has been given to organizational change to accommodate community participation? • What are the strengths and weaknesses of the existing organization? • What were the constraints to effective change? • What is the formal structure of the county/township (departmental and management structures in general and poverty alleviation specifically)? • Is it possible to identify formal and informal structural hierarchies? • Do intra-departmental structures affect or potentially affect participatory processes? • Where are the various poverty alleviation initiatives located within the county and village structures? • Are they within one department? How will the implementation of a participatory project affect existing roles, responsibilities and relationships and therefore potentially affect the take-up of participatory process? • Has the county/township implemented any internal reforms to improve its capacity to form partnerships with the community and to promote or respond to community participation in the delivery of services?
To what extent do established county/township systems and procedures affect the nature and form of participation and partnership in the delivery of services?	• Are there any effective administrative/project mechanisms which promote public involvement in planning and implementation? (Statutory consultation/publication of planning applications, complaints procedures, systems of public grievance and redress, village committees, federations, eg.) • What procedures block participatory approaches? • Has the county/township implemented any internal reforms to established systems which have improved its capacity to form partnerships with the community and to promote or respond to community participation in the delivery of services?

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