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IFAD'S FOLLOW-UP TO THE CONFERENCE ON HUNGER AND POVERTY  
PROGRESS REPORT ON  
THE POPULAR COALITION TO ERADICATE HUNGER AND POVERTY

I. Background

1. In January 1996, a full report was submitted to the Governing Council on the outcome of the Conference on Hunger and Poverty held in Brussels in November 1995 and on the Popular Coalition to Eradicate Hunger and Poverty established upon the recommendation of the conference. In January 1997, the Governing Council was provided with an oral progress report on the Coalition, its evolution and its activities. As was reported then, the Coalition is conceived as a consortium of action and a strategic partnership among civil-society and inter-governmental organizations with a single objective: build upon and enhance the dynamism and potential of civil-society organizations to fight hunger and poverty.

II. The Focus

2. Through jointly planned activities, involving the direct participation of rural poor people and their organizations, the Coalition initiates and supports civil-society activities in the following areas:

- (a) increasing access of the poor to productive resources, especially land and water, by reviving agrarian reform on national and international agendas. The Coalition will identify, disseminate and support the replication of successful civil-society experiences in land redistribution, conflict resolution, titling and inheritance rights, and sustainable management of common property resources;
- (b) capacity-building of civil-society organizations at the local and community levels;
- (c) establishing knowledge networks to collect and disseminate the experience and knowledge of civil-society organizations and to identify promising initiatives for upscaling and replication;

- (d) devising strategies to build public awareness and create political will in the south and north in order to open up more space for policy reform and civil-society initiatives;
- (e) developing strategies of collaboration for emergency preparedness, prevention, rehabilitation and reconstruction, in relation to both natural and man-made calamities in pilot countries; and
- (f) ensuring the early implementation of the Convention to Combat Desertification, with a special focus on urgent action for Africa.

### III. Guiding Principles and Modalities of Work

3. The Popular Coalition to Eradicate Hunger and Poverty is not a new institution. It is a pluralistic partnership of inter-governmental bodies and civil-society organizations. It aspires to new ways of collaboration for its diverse partners and stakeholders based on networking, joint planning, consensus-building, collective decision-making and joint implementation and monitoring of agreed-upon activities. The implementation of operations is conceived as an evolving process to be followed gradually and through consecutive phases, often starting out with pilot and experimental programmes. In this context, various action groups have been established to pursue the planning and implementation of activities through a polycentric, participatory and decentralized approach. Each group is composed of both civil-society and inter-governmental organizations, with one entity acting as the focal point of the group.

4. Participation in the Coalition is open to all those inter-governmental and civil-society organizations and donor agencies that express, in writing, their interest in joining and their readiness to adhere, inter alia, to the following conditions:

- (a) to pool part of their resources in terms of institutional capacity and/or finance, policy attention and advocacy to achieve the objectives of the Coalition; and
- (b) to mainstream the lessons learned into their operations and recommend the adoption of appropriate measures in support of the Coalition's activities;

5. The first two years of the Coalition's life have been overseen by an Interim Committee. This body consists of seven international and regional non governmental organizations (NGOs), along with IFAD, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the World Food Programme (WFP), the World Bank and the European Commission. The Interim Committee will shortly be replaced by a 12-member Steering Committee, which will guide the implementation of the Programme of Action of the Coalition with IFAD as the focal point. As such, the Fund will be responsible for coordination of activities at the global level.

### IV. Achievements

6. To date, the Coalition encompasses about 400 diverse organizations that have indicated their interest in being associated with its programme and activities, 60% of them civil-society organizations including NGOs. Its founding organizations have agreed upon a set of Guiding Principles for the Coalition, including its definition and scope, its structure and operational strategy and the conditions for participation (paragraphs 3 - 5 above). A two-year programme of work has also been agreed upon.

For its implementation, the Coalition partners have committed themselves to pooling their resources and institutional capacities, using the experience and potential of NGOs and other civil-society organizations.

7. In April 1997, the Executive Board of IFAD approved a technical assistance grant of USD 900 000 towards an estimated total amount of USD 1 835 000 to cover the cost of a small secretariat (one professional and one secretary) and the preparatory activities for the implementation of the Coalition's programme of work. Other participants in the Coalition are expected to contribute to the coverage of these costs. FAO is already providing in-kind contributions in the form of technical expertise in a number of areas relating to the activities of the Coalition. The WFP has announced an initial contribution of USD 100 000. NGO partners have confirmed their readiness to contribute, with some having already paid such contributions. Support is expected shortly from the World Bank and the European Commission. Voluntary contributions have been received from Denmark, Italy, Japan and Switzerland towards preparatory activities.

#### Linkages with the World Food Summit

8. The Coalition was actively involved in the preparatory process of the World Food Summit (WFS) convened by FAO in November 1996. Members of its Interim Committee participated in and addressed all preparatory meetings, both regional and those of the Committee on Food Security, and contributed to the drafting of the WFS Plan of Action. The Secretary General of the WFS, who participated in the Conference on Hunger and Poverty, saw its Programme of Action as offering "a direction, as well as practical ways and means, for moving ahead together." Indeed the Programme of Action of the Coalition and the Plan of Action of the WFS converge on a number of important goals, most notably those of promoting access of the poor to productive resources and food security, revival of agrarian reform and combating desertification. The NGO Forum held in connection with the WFS recognized the Coalition as "one of the major executive mechanisms available for the implementation of the Summit's Plan of Action."

9. Moreover, as agreed between the Director General of FAO and the President of IFAD, an ACC Network on Rural Development and Food Security was established early this year. The Secretary General of the United Nations welcomed this initiative. The ACC Network replaces the former ACC Sub-Committee on Rural Development, and will constitute the mechanism for inter-agency follow-up to the WFS, with a focus on the implementation of the Rome Declaration on World Food Security and the WFS Plan of Action. FAO will handle the general arrangements for the ACC Network and IFAD will manage the process associated with the analysis of selected themes chosen at the country level, through evaluation findings and activities related to knowledge generation. As the Network will be open to non-UN partners, particularly civil-society organizations, it will also provide an effective vehicle for further support to the activities of the Coalition.

#### Knowledge Networks

10. Increased access by the poor to productive resources (particularly land and water) has a significant impact on the eradication of hunger and poverty. Hence the Coalition's particular focus on the revival of land reform. Given the poor experience of Government-initiated and centrally administered land reform, the Coalition approaches this challenge from a new perspective, whereby a major role is identified and secured for civil-society organizations, in particular at the grass-roots level. In fact, successful efforts, supported by NGOs and other civil-society organizations, and emerging localized land markets provide a good basis for identification and promotion of alternative approaches, benefiting from local knowledge, experience and innovation. Within this context, the following networks have been designed and established:

- (a) Knowledge Network on Civil-Society Initiatives in Land Reform and Tenurial Security in Developing Countries. This network focuses on the collection, analysis and dissemination of information on those civil-society initiatives. Such initiatives include local actions that aim to improve the access of the rural poor people to land and water resources, including common property resources. They also include conflict resolution, land rights and entitlements, protection of the rights of women and indigenous organizations. The network at its initial stage covers 25 countries divided into groups of three-to-five countries from seven major subregions (i.e., Southeast Asia, South Asia, Near East and North Africa, the Southern African Development Community (SADC) and East Africa, Central and West Africa, South America, Central America and the Caribbean). Each group of countries has one regional node, each country one focal institution. National institutions collect information from as many local groups as possible, conduct preliminary screening and synthesize information for dissemination among other national entities and to their regional nodes. The latter further review and analyse this information for subsequent dissemination to the other regional nodes and relevant institutions worldwide. By this process, the most successful practices, policies and innovative institutional arrangements will be brought to the Coalition for possible scaling up and replication through use of the Coalition's facilities and joint efforts. The operation of the network, involving effective linkages from the international down to the grass-roots level, has already begun. Meanwhile, the scaling up of a promising grass-roots initiative is being tested in the context of a project situated in Northern Mindanao, The Philippines. The project aims at empowering rural communities through land-tenure improvements and support services for socio-economic activities. In so doing, it will have both direct and indirect impact on the maintenance of peace in Mindanao. The ongoing conflicts in the region are primarily based on territorial disputes and asset control. Thus the success of agrarian reform, in both the lowlands and the uplands, will have direct bearing on the peace process. The issuance of certificates of ancestral domain claims, for example, will affect thousands of hectares claimed by indigenous communities and Muslim groups. In addition, a number of these groups are targeted as direct beneficiaries of a number of economic activities. IFAD is the focal institution for the overall management of the network.
- (b) Knowledge Network on Negotiated Land Reform (NERALEN) complements the first network by focusing primarily on an investigation of the dynamics of the land markets in four pilot countries (Brazil, Colombia, South Africa and The Philippines) regarding the access of the poor to land and their capacity to use the land profitably once they have access. The objective of NERALEN is to facilitate the exchange of information and knowledge and to provide advice to civil-society organizations, NGOs and public officials involved in policy analysis and practical aspects of land transfers through the market. To that end, it will analyse the legal, economic and institutional/procedural issues that create blockages to poor people benefiting from market-assisted land reform and the potential role of government, development agencies and civil-society organizations in resolving such blockages. In addition, NERALEN will identify investment opportunities that would facilitate the elimination of obstacles and constraints and enhance opportunities for poor people to gain equitable access to the land market. NERALEN will become operational in the beginning of 1998. FAO is the lead agency for NERALEN, with the World Bank and IFAD involved in backstopping the network.

### Pooling of Resources

11. As mentioned in paragraph 6, the members of the Coalition, including civil-society organizations, have committed themselves to pooling their resources for the implementation of the activities planned jointly under its Programme of Action. This commitment goes beyond the provision of administrative costs and support to preparatory activities, and extends to the field level. To meet this objective, the Coalition has designed and is in the process of launching two specific collaborative arrangements:

- (a) a facility in response to the call of the Conference on Hunger and Poverty to support innovative capacity-building programmes for civil-society organizations. Consistent with the major focus of the Programme of Action, the goal of this facility also centres on land reform. Thus, it will aim at enhancing the ability of rural poor people and their organizations to gain and/or protect their access to land, water and common property resources and to the tools and processes (including knowledge, technology, institutional models and finance) that will enable them to manage such resources sustainably. To achieve these objectives, the facility will support civil-society initiatives in policy formulation, communication and networking, coalition-building, institutional reforms and decentralization, initiation of pilot activities, and dissemination of best practices and lessons learned in the above areas. Both knowledge networks mentioned above are expected to provide valuable data and information for the effective utilization of the resources of the facility;
- (b) an international loan guarantee system, which would complement existing initiatives in the area of microfinance by promoting a coordinated syndicate of NGOs and intermediary finance institutions involved in the provision of loan guarantees. The overall objective of the system is to bring about a synergy between the activities of a multitude of actors and hence to significantly increase the impact and scope of credit retailing to poor rural producers.

### Other Activities

12. The success of the Coalition will depend on the degree to which it can secure a fully participatory process of decision-making among its various partners, sharing experiences and encouraging joint actions on the basis of consensus. This implies that the implementation of activities should follow a gradual approach, using, in a number of cases, pilot and experimental undertakings.

13. Within this context, three pilot countries have been selected for the development of collaborative strategies for emergency preparedness and rehabilitation, building upon the potential of civil-society organizations: Bangladesh, Guatemala and Mali. A specific plan of activities needs to be prepared. As a first step, and in order to develop a better understanding of the potential of civil-society in such activities, a relevant study is being undertaken in Bangladesh, under the leadership of the WFP. Similar studies will follow in the other two countries.

14. Moreover, with a view to raising public awareness and political will, modalities for close collaboration with the FAO Food for All Campaign are presently under review.