



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

I. INTRODUCTION

1. The IFAD-sponsored Conference on Hunger and Poverty, held at Brussels, Belgium, in November 1995, gave international recognition to the need to engage civil society in setting the global development agenda and to merge the common missions of the public sector, multilaterals and civil society into one strategy for fighting hunger and poverty. The Conference created the Popular Coalition to Eradicate Hunger and Poverty (the Coalition) as a consortium of intergovernmental, civil-society and bilateral organizations committed to the empowerment of the rural poor by improving their access to productive assets, especially land and water, and increasing their direct participation in decision-making at the local, national, regional and international levels. The aim of the Coalition is to support practical community-level activities based on networking, joint planning, collective decision-making, consensus building and peer monitoring by participants. Its Programme of Action recognizes that the rural poor have well-established practices and coping strategies that have matured over generations, and that their experience, traditions and innovations form the basis upon which new initiatives must build.

2. Through jointly planned activities that involve direct participation of rural poor people and their organizations, the Coalition facilitates and supports civil-society programmes in the areas of:

- increasing access of the poor to productive assets by reviving agrarian reform on national and international agendas;
- strengthening the capacity of civil-society organizations at the local and community levels;



- establishing knowledge networks to disseminate practical experiences on land reform and tenurial security and identifying promising initiatives that can be scaled up and replicated;
- developing strategies of collaboration and programmes for emergency preparedness and prevention;
- devising strategies to build public awareness and create political will in the south and the north in order to foster both policy reform and the adoption of civil-society initiatives; and
- supporting the early implementation of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification, with a special focus on urgent action for Africa.

3. For the rural poor, the right to land and water is a basic solution to alleviating the problems of poverty and hunger. Without security of land tenure, poor rural people have no sustainable access to the natural resources, credit, improved technologies and support services needed to improve their productivity and incomes. Accordingly, the promotion and facilitation of agrarian reform has been chosen as the Coalition's central goal. While land tenure touches on the fundamental inequities in rural societies, the successful efforts of civil society, accompanied by the recent opening up of land markets, have shown alternative ways of improving the security of land tenure.

4. The effective functioning of any coalition requires the nurturing of similar but often parallel actions of diverse development actors into a common, coherent and coordinated programming approach. This requires the building of mutual confidence, the pooling of resources and the unifying effect of a comprehensive strategic plan. As such, the unique partnership of organizations encompassing the Coalition provides for a combination of diverse but complementary spheres of knowledge and resources to address the economic and social challenges inherent in agrarian issues.

5. As the focal point of the Coalition, IFAD is working with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the World Food Programme (WFP), the World Bank, the European Commission and 11 regional and sectoral non-governmental organizations (NGOs). These organizations comprise the Interim Steering Committee of the Coalition, set up to implement its Programme of Action through a pluralistic, participatory and polycentric model of work. The Interim Steering Committee has charged IFAD with following up on the work of the Coalition and ensuring that it evolves to a stage where concrete achievements would justify its extension to additional partners and the establishment of the First Assembly of the partners. The Coalition has now arrived at this stage in its development.

II. ACHIEVEMENTS

Working Together: Building the Coalition

6. The initial period of the Coalition was devoted to gradually developing ways of working together, based on joint planning, consensus-building on activities to be implemented, and collective decision-making regardless of the size, type, origin or function of each participating organization.

7. The Coalition has been firmly established with an agreed framework for its operation that includes:

- a group of founding partners to guide the Coalition in transforming the Programme of Action of the Brussels Conference into a programme of specific work with the required means and mechanisms for its implementation;



- a set of guiding principles for participation in, and the operation of, the Coalition;
- a governing structure, including subsidiary bodies, and the convening of an annual assembly of the Coalition's participant organizations;
- a strategic plan for an interim period of two years; and
- action groups representative of the civil-society and intergovernmental diversity of the organizations encompassing the Coalition. These action groups are responsible for designing specific activities to be undertaken through the knowledge networks on agrarian reform and land tenure, the Community Empowerment Facility, the International Loan Guarantee System, the Programme for Emergency Preparedness and Prevention, and the Programme to Build Public Awareness and Create Political Will.

Improving the Access of the Rural Poor to Productive Assets

8. As the focus of the Coalition is on increasing the access of the poor to productive resources, especially land and water, as essential conditions for improving living standards and social stability in rural areas, top priority is accorded to the revival of land reform on national and international agendas. The Coalition responds to this challenge from a new perspective by building upon the experience, knowledge and potential of civil-society organizations. Two specific initiatives have been taken to date: the building of knowledge networks on agrarian reform and land tenure; and the establishment of a Community Empowerment Facility.

Knowledge Networks on Agrarian Reform and Land Tenure

9. Physical isolation and scarce resources are the constants of life for the rural poor. Access to data and knowledge are the variables that can transform rural life. Lessons from the past reveal that many good ideas and experiences at the grass-roots level remain localized, and that their features are never replicated, cross-fertilized and scaled up to yield benefits at the national level. Through the knowledge networks, communities attempting to address particular land tenure issues will benefit from the experience of those who have overcome similar constraints elsewhere.

10. The Knowledge Network on Civil-Society Initiatives in Land Reform and Tenurial Security in Developing Countries (the Knowledge Network on Civil-Society Initiatives) focuses on the collection, review and dissemination of information on civil-society initiatives to improve the access of rural poor people to land and water resources, including common property resources. Launched in February 1998, this network comprises 23 national-level, civil-society organizations clustered into seven regional nodes consisting of Southern Africa, Central and West Africa, North Africa and the Near East, South Asia, Southeast Asia, South America, and Central America and the Caribbean. Each regional node has presented an analysis of land issues and the practical experiences of the national nodes in its cluster. Such analysis forms an important basis for planning national and regional programmes and provides an initial body of civil-society experience for dissemination through the network. This first phase has validated the concept that the knowledge from civil society is valuable to other communities that often encounter constraints overcome elsewhere. Through regional conferences held in 1998, each national and regional node developed a two-year plan of action, including, *inter alia*, the documentation, analysis and dissemination of experience gained in achieving secure land tenure. These plans of action also include the transformation of experiences into policy options for dialogue with government, strengthening the capacity of community-based organizations, providing training and support in resolving conflicts, educating communities on land issues, and



identifying promising experiences for possible scaling up and replication. The Coalition has assessed these proposals and is currently engaged in negotiating the conditions for cofunding. The Knowledge Network on Civil-Society Initiatives has also assessed the communication requirements of participating nodes, and is now engaged in designing various communication instruments required for effective networking from the grass-roots to the international level. The second phase of the network will be fully operational in mid-1999. IFAD is responsible for the overall management of the network.

11. The Negotiated Land Reform Network complements the Knowledge Network on Civil-Society Initiatives by focusing primarily on an investigation of the dynamics of market-assisted land reform in Brazil, Colombia, The Philippines and South Africa, and is examining the use of land markets as a mechanism to improve the access of the poor to productive assets. Through field missions involving local government officials and civil society, the network has developed country-level profiles on the agrarian contexts and related legislative and regulatory frameworks for each of the four countries. In this connections, it is planned to analyse the legal, economic and institutional issues that create blockages to poor people benefiting from land transfers through the market, and to identify the potential role of government, development agencies and civil society in resolving such blockages. In 1999, the network will activate an electronic information system for exchanging the emerging knowledge. FAO is the lead agency, with the World Bank, IFAD and two regional NGO networks acting as the main partners in the design and implementation of the network.

Community Empowerment Facility

12. The Coalition has established a Community Empowerment Facility that aims at supporting field-level activities to enhance the ability of the poor and their organizations to gain and protect access to land, water and common property resources and to the tools and processes needed to manage them on a sustainable basis. This will include supporting civil-society organizations to become active interlocutors in the policy-making process.

13. To facilitate this initiative, an action group comprising the World Bank, FAO, IFAD, the International Federation of Agricultural Producers and three NGOs has prepared a basic framework for the facility.

14. On the basis of that framework, the World Bank has made an initial commitment of USD 1.5 million to the facility, which it regards as a unique instrument for strengthening the capacity of civil society, and IFAD has provided a technical assistance (TA) grant of USD 1.6 million. Indications have been received of possible additional funding in the amount of USD 2 million, and discussions are being held with other potential donors. The funding received to date will be used to launch the facility during the first quarter of 1999, in order to:

- provide initial funding for projects according to the mandate and beneficiary activities as set forth in the basic framework;
- act as a catalyst for a multi-donor funding initiative; and
- provide initial capital for the establishment of the facility as an endowment fund.



Other Elements of the Programme of Action

15. The Coalition has completed an initial study on the establishment of an International Loan Guarantee System. The aim is to boost confidence among commercial lenders in providing expanded credit services to the rural poor through the combination of a risk-sharing or guarantee system and use of financial intermediaries from civil society to avoid the high transaction costs involved in serving the dispersed rural populations. This initiative will involve three-to-five field-based programmes in 1999 to determine the critical factors for success, based on which the Coalition will give consideration to wider implementation.

16. The Coalition's Programme for Emergency Preparedness and Prevention has identified three countries for the development of collaborative strategies building on the potential of civil-society organizations: Bangladesh, Guatemala and Mali. A framework has been established for the first initiative, which is to be undertaken in Bangladesh in mid-1999 under the leadership of WFP. An action group is being formed to elaborate the programme planned for Guatemala with regard to developing effective strategies in post-conflict situations. This group will include, among others, the World Bank and the Rigoberta Menchú Tum Foundation. Initial work in the two countries reveals that land tenure is a significant, but not exclusive, factor contributing to the occurrence and recurrence of natural and conflict-related emergencies.

The ACC Network on Rural Development and Food Security

17. In 1997, the United Nations Administrative Committee on Co-ordination (ACC) established the Network on Rural Development and Food Security, which "constitutes, inter alia, the mechanism for interagency follow-up to the World Food Summit and supports the Popular Coalition to Eradicate Hunger and Poverty". The following year, various initiatives were identified for collaboration with the network, including the development of three-to-four pilot projects where civil-society participants in the Coalition and country-level thematic groups would undertake community capacity-building activities for gaining access to productive resources.

Resource Mobilization

18. The members of the Coalition have agreed to pool resources for the implementation of activities under the Programme of Action. Since the Conference on Hunger and Poverty in 1995, the Coalition has mobilized a total of USD 4 970 000: USD 4 750 000 in cash, and another USD 220 000 from FAO in the form of technical services. IFAD has provided two TA grants: one of USD 50 000 in March 1996; and another, in April 1997, of USD 900 000. Supplementary funds totalling USD 590 000 have been mobilized from Denmark, Italy, Japan and Switzerland. WFP has contributed USD 100 000, and an initial NGO contribution of USD 2 000 has been received. The Community Empowerment Facility has mobilized USD 1.5 million from the World Bank and USD 1.6 million from IFAD.

III. RELATIONSHIP TO IFAD

19. The objectives of the Coalition are consistent with and complementary to the programmes and corporate strategy of IFAD. The Coalition is expected to widen IFAD's information and knowledge base for programme preparation and to assist in identifying new partners that may contribute to strengthening IFAD project/programme implementation. The activities of the Coalition will contribute to IFAD's corporate strategy in the following areas: (a) developing new approaches and alliances for a changing global environment; (b) establishing and using knowledge networks on rural



poverty in order to strengthen IFAD as a recognized knowledge organization; and (c) ensuring an effective IFAD presence at the field level by expanding its outreach.

20. The Coalition provides IFAD with a unique opportunity for strategic collaboration with the international institutions and civil-society organizations that regard the Coalition as an opportunity to develop new ways of working towards the common goal of improving the productivity and incomes of the rural poor.