This report, prepared by Gender Consultant, Mrs Jennifer Clement, provides an overview of the philosophy and methodologies of participation practiced internationally and within Viet Nam. It then examines the current and potential roles of existing institutions in Viet Nam, before going on to discuss opportunities and constraints to people's participation with an emphasis on particular constraints faced by women, although attempts have been made to weave gender concerns throughout the document. It concludes by providing recommendations for consideration by the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (MARD) for its draft Rural Development Programme; for Phase II of the project "Strengthening Capacity for the Renewal of Rural Development in Viet Nam"; and for a possible leadership training programme.

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Abbreviations

CFAW Committee for the Advancement of Women
CFWS Centre for Family and Women's Studies
DARD Department of Agriculture and Rural Development
GTZ Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit (German Technical Cooperation)
Executive Summary

Participation in Practice

There appears to be general agreement among international donors and Government agencies that participation is a major key to economic and social development. The question, however, is whether or not everyone means the same thing when they use this one word.

The over-riding impression is that Vietnamese officials and the rural poor tend to see participation in terms of mobilisation. It is a one-way means of communication from the top-down, with the rural poor taking part in programmes which are decided upon and organised by higher up officials. The focus is very much on the role of the Government, while neglecting the equally important roles of the private sector and civil society.

In general, the meaning of participation, for international agencies is a process in which stakeholders, particularly the most disadvantaged, influence and share in determining development initiatives and share in making decisions about resources which affect them. It is not just concerned with economic development, but is a process of human or personal development.

In this study participation has been defined as a continuum. At one end the participants in development are viewed as passive beneficiaries who receive services. At the other end, they are self-motivated and willing to take initiatives.

The Role of Vietnamese Institutions in Participation

The Government of Viet Nam relies heavily on state institutions to promote and implement their policies to mobilise the people. This has proven extremely successful in terms of creating economic growth and providing social services and infrastructure. With the move to doi moi, the role of many of these institutions has changed, although, in many cases, they have not yet adapted well enough to meet the needs of rural people in a market economy. In parts of the country, particularly remote areas, these institutions are still very strong, while in areas which are experiencing greater household economic growth, these institutions are becoming more
irrelevant to people's daily lives.

In the past, the cooperative was an important rural institution which did the work of the State, particularly tax collection and labour mobilisation. Throughout the country, however, the cooperative system has largely collapsed. Nonetheless, it is still regarded by the State as an important institution in rural development and economic growth. With the spread of doi moi it can be assumed that more and more households will want to cooperate in order to maximise their income, but they may choose to do so outside of the Cooperative Law.

Mass organisations have a strong membership base and reach down from national to province, district, commune, village and even hamlet levels. This makes them very effective at spreading information down the line of command. But it does not appear that this same chain is yet used to carry information and needs from the bottom up, although in theory this option obviously exists. Under doi moi, mass organisations have moved away from pure propaganda dissemination to assisting with economic activities such as the provision of seeds, fertilisers and credit.

With few exceptions, villagers (men and women) believe that the Viet Nam Women's Union (VWU) is the most important of the mass organisations. The Women's Union also appears to be the "mass Organisation of choice" for the donor community. The Farmers' Union was seen as the second most favoured mass Organisation after the VWU, while the Youth Union is less active now in the rural areas than it was during the war period.

At present there is no legal framework for local non-government organisations, although there has also been a reported rise in economic-based interest groups which are formed to share resources, buy production input, acquire loans or exchange labour. There does not yet appear to be any groups forming for social or political reasons.

Extension services are a fairly new structure in Viet Nam and they face a multitude of problems, including an inadequate number of staff. The officers are often trained in specific areas which can limit the advice that they give to farmers. It is also difficult for staff to travel to remote communes as the services lack funding for per diems or petrol. There are indications that in parts of the country richer farmers can pay for and therefore monopolise extension services so the poorer households are missing out on vital services. Male extension officers dominate, and they may neglect the needs of female farmers.

Opportunities and Constraints for People's Participation

Opportunities

Government Policy Framework:

The Viet Nam Government has a strong commitment to involving people in development which is highlighted in several government reports and documents.

Doi moi:

The Government's renovation or doi moi policy also provides more room for people to take part in their own economic development although the full potential of doi moi has still not been reached. The effect of this policy is more apparent in areas close to markets and transportation and with greater access to technical knowledge and inputs.

Decentralisation and administration reform:

At present the Government is going through a process of decentralisation and administrative reforms. It is too early yet to see the impact of these reforms but, if well implemented, they have potential for institutional changes that could allow people better representation and a greater say in decisions that affect their lives.

Tradition of helping others and mobilisation:

At the village level there is a tradition of helping others. People are also used to contributing money and labour when called upon to do so, although resentments occur when people feel that their contributions are not accountable.

Extensive networks of institutions:
Viet Nam has an extensive network of Party, Government and mass organisations from the central to the grassroots level. This provides the potential for encouraging community development initiatives and for feeding back into political decision-making.

**Availability of resources: land, labour, literacy and infrastructure:**

Farmers see their most enabling resources as land and labour. In addition to these two resources, is also the relatively high rate of literacy in Viet Nam which enables the Government to pass on information successfully.

**Officials commitment to development:**

Despite low wages and poor working conditions, many provincial and district officials are enthusiastic and committed to assisting the poor.

**Willingness of people to participate:**

Many villagers may never before have been asked their opinion, especially women. However, it is the experience of the various projects that when consulted, people are enthusiastic.

**People are convinced through experience:**

Participation in their own decision-making is a difficult concept to convey to people who have never experienced it, but those who have had exposure to participatory approaches are usually convinced by what they experience.

**Constraints**

**Lack of a common definition and concept of participation:**

In Viet Nam, officials and grassroots people usually talk of participation in terms of passive participation, such as listening to a higher authority pass on information, or in terms of mobilisation of labour and financial contributions through Government and mass organisations. In Viet Nam there is little comprehension of what participation through personal development and self-motivation would be like.

**Lack of financial and production resources:**

Those who are the poorest have the least human, financial and in-kind resources to spend on participating in village-level activities or in taking risks or initiatives.

**Dependency on the State:**

Viet Nam has clearly achieved a great deal through top-down structures. Yet this has also created problems of a reliance on top-down communication and dependency on the State.

**Lack of skills in problem analysis:**

Villagers tend to define their problems narrowly in terms of a lack of a government service. This then limits the solutions that they see before them.

**Lack of accountability of representational bodies:**

The government needs to ensure there are accountable mechanisms and transparency of processes, clear channels of representation and means of making complaints, to ensure the rights of each citizen are represented.

**Need for institutional support:**

There is a growing recognition that if processes of grassroots participation are to be sustainable, officials at all levels have to be informed and supportive.
Difficult to change long-held beliefs:

It is relatively easy to teach the methods and tools, but the process of changing people's attitudes and behaviour takes much longer. Change is going to have to take place slowly and systematically.

Community development is hard work and takes time:

Working with local communities is a long-term commitment, involving repeated visits over a long period of time to remote areas by the community development worker.

Lack of Government staff and funding:

If the Government intends to carry out participatory approaches similar to those of international donors, it faces the dual constraints of lack of funding and low staff numbers.

Identifying community development workers or "motivators"

One issue to be addressed is who is best placed to be trained in community development and participatory approaches so as to implement these methods in the field. Leaders are not necessarily the best people for this. It depends on the skills, motivation and enthusiasm of the individual.

Gender Inequalities in Rural Development

Barriers to women's participation:

A good indication of whether participation is occurring and if the more disadvantaged are being reached, is to look at the participation of women. Clearly, women's participation in economic development is vital as they do the majority of agricultural, household and community work. Yet women are still not participating in local political decisions. In the Government's drive to improve rural development, female farmers are more poorly positioned than men to take advantage of economic growth.

Social expectations and stereotypes:

Above all else, the greatest constraints for women are cultural attitudes, social expectations, stereotypes and roles placed on them. All other constraints stem from this central issue.

Education:

When men and women were asked what was the greatest constraint women faced, they often gave low education as the primary reason. However, it is arguable whether or not this is the main reason. In many cases it may be true, but it is also an easy excuse which allows the status quo to continue.

Leadership and decision-making:

Women are still under-represented in formal decision-making processes. Yet if women can perform well within the framework of the VWU, why aren't these women or women of equal calibre also making it to more mainstream decision-making positions?

Division of labour:

A key to understanding women's inequality is to understand the current gendered division of labour in Viet Nam. This division occurs at two levels. Firstly, within the household women are limited by expectations that they must take major responsibility for domestic and childcare work in the family.

The second division occurs within the productive workforce where work is often segregated along gender lines. Women carry out between 60% to 70% of the agricultural workload. In many rural areas men migrate seasonally to find work, leaving 50% of rural households female-headed for some part of the year. Women farmers also have less access than male farmers to farm technology, technical knowledge, savings and operating capital.

Land allocation:
Land certificates are only issued in one name—usually the male head of the household. This has implications for women's rights in divorce and inheritance as well as their access to credit and extension services. Most of the households to have their land recently re-appropriated by the authorities have been female-headed.

**Training:**

When training opportunities do arise, women are much less likely to access this training as they are simply overlooked or because women have less ability and time to travel outside of the village. Having female trainers running a course has a positive influence on both women's participation and on male attitudes towards women's abilities.

**Off-farm rural labour:**

The Government's strategy to strengthen rural industrialisation will offer off-farm work opportunities for women. Yet in many State-owned Enterprises (SOEs) and foreign joint ventures that employ mainly women, research has found overwhelming evidence of poor levels of hygiene, contact with toxic substances, noise, heat, long hours and monotonous work to be major problems.

**Women in MARD**

Nationwide, women make up 51% of all employees in the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (MARD), working mainly in the State Farms and 425 SOEs of MARD. Women in MARD lack confidence so they need to be made more aware of their abilities, while men have to become more sensitive about women's needs and abilities. Having women in higher positions in MARD is a necessary step so that they can act as role models to encourage other women.

1. **Introduction**

The United Nations *Report on Poverty Elimination in Viet Nam* identifies five broad underlying causes of poverty in Viet Nam (UN, 1995:3). These are:

- isolation
- excessive risks
- inadequate productive resources for income generation
- lack of sustainability (financial, environmental); and
- lack of participation.

The focus of this study is on the fifth of these causes—participation. However, it touches on the other four elements as well as these issues are intertwined and those people who live in the greatest isolation, who face risks, and who lack productive resources and sustainability are—as was found in this study—usually those whose ability to participate in economic and social development is weakest.

The more specific objectives of this report are to:

- analyse the opportunities to strengthen the local involvement of women and men in rural development planning;
- identify constraints to a more participatory and gender-responsive approach to rural development; and
- make recommendations for policies and strategies to ensure community-responsive, gender-equitable and sustainable development programmes in rural areas.

The report is based on interviews with and a desk study of the work of a variety of agencies (government agencies, mass organisations, research institutions and international donors) who have experience in Viet Nam in both gender-responsive and participatory planning. It has been supplemented by semi-structured field interviews and group discussions with province, district and local leaders and villagers in Ha Giang and Tra Vinh. In the group discussions held at village level, the relevance of grassroots institutions was discussed by asking groups (some men only, some women only and some mixed) to prepare institutional diagrams which highlight the importance and inter-relationship between informal and formal institutions. The participants were also asked to identify what they saw as their main constraints to participation in community and rural development and to identify possible solutions that could come either from within or outside of the village.
One important issue to bear in mind when reading this report, is that Viet Nam is an extremely diverse country and it is impossible to generalise about people’s attitudes, motives and economic conditions. What may be true for certain people in a certain province or district will not be valid for people in other parts of the country. An attempt has been made to try to show some of this diversity in that two different provinces were chosen for the field work - Ha Giang and Tra Vinh.

2. Participation in Practice: The Philosophy, Methods and Tools

2.1 The Role of Participation in Poverty Alleviation

Many donors - Non-government Organisation (NGO), bilateral and multilateral - are currently promoting greater participation in their programmes and projects. This emphasis is based on worldwide experience which shows that development efforts which do not consult and involve the local beneficiaries are more likely to fail or to lack sustainability. Participation has been found to be an essential ingredient of project success as it helps create ownership of project objectives, activities and outcomes by the project recipients. Recipients move from being merely beneficiaries to being active agents in their own development.

To this end, the UN Report Catching Up: Capacity Development for Poverty Elimination in Viet Nam points out that:

"the poor are usually without influence or respect. They are seldom consulted about programmes from which they are supposed to benefit...If the final consumer does not get a chance to communicate what is working and what is not, most programmes will miss their mark or be much less effective than they might become" (UN, 1996:5).

2.2 The Meaning of "Participation"

There appears to be general agreement among international donors and Government agencies that participation is a major key to economic and social development. The question, however, is whether or not everyone means the same thing when they use this one word. One comment from both Vietnamese and foreign informants was the problem they have encountered with the interpretation of the word "participation".

The over-riding impression is that Vietnamese officials tend to see participation in terms of mobilisation. It is a one-way means of communication from the top-down, with the rural poor taking part in programmes which are decided upon and organised by higher-up officials. The attitudes expressed by Government personnel and villagers that were interviewed, tend to be that, in order to promote the participation of rural people, the Government has to provide appropriate policies, provision of agricultural inputs and technology to enable and encourage people to participate in development. In this context participation is interpreted in an economic sense of taking part in agricultural production.

Many international agencies are also increasingly incorporating participation as a criteria into their projects, with the adoption of participatory approaches usually being driven more by donor demands than being expressed by Government officials. In general, the meaning of participation, for international agencies is a process in which stakeholders, particularly the most disadvantaged, influence and share in determining development initiatives and share in making decisions about resources which affect them. It is not just concerned with economic development, but is a process of human or personal development which involves the rise of people's self-confidence, initiative, creativity, responsibility and cooperation (Burkey, 1993:56).

The difference between these two definitions are understandable in a historical and cultural context. The first has emerged from a culture influenced by Confucian and Marxist philosophy - both of which promote a passive respect for authority. The role of leaders under both philosophies is to decide what is morally good for the people.

The second definition has emerged from within Third World countries in Asia, Latin America and Africa: countries in which the poor and disadvantaged have been seen to face greater suffering and injustice in the face of so-called development efforts. The differences in definitions involve different conceptualisations of power relations - with whom power and responsibilities lie - and with the overall nature of decision-making processes.
Two definitions of participation have been offered above, but naturally more can be found as participation will continue to mean different things to different people in different settings. In this study participation has been defined as a continuum. At one end the participants in development are viewed as passive beneficiaries who receive services. Although much good work has been done through this method, it is necessary to increase women’s and men’s ability to act for themselves - to take initiatives and risks. Only through doing so will development efforts be sustainable and self-perpetuating in the longer term.

We can define this continuum as:

1. **Passive Participation:**
   People participate by being told what is going to happen. It is usually a top-down announcement by government officials or project staff.

2. **Participation in Information Giving:**
   People participate by answering questions asked by outside researchers. They have no input into how the research is used.

3. **Forced or Obligatory Participation:**
   People participate by providing money, labour or other resources because they believe it is expected of them or it is their duty. But people may have little motivation or influence in determining what they contribute.

4. **Participation Driven by Outside Organisations:**
   People participate voluntarily in group activities related to a project or an activity. Their participation is voluntary, but is dependent upon external people or organisations (such as mass organisations or project agencies) to initiate, facilitate and monitor activities.

5. **Self-motivation:**
   People participate in activities for rural development by taking initiatives independent of external organisations.

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**Participation Continuum**

1. Passive
2. Information Giving
3. Forced or Obligatory
4. Driven by outsiders
5. Self-motivated

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2.3 **Issues of Power Relations and Participation**

Participation, particularly at level 5 of the above continuum - self-motivation - can be seen as not just an economic activity, but an activity that can create social and political change. It is indeed political as it aims to empower the disempowered and to change existing power relationships. Some in positions of authority may find this concept a challenge to their own power base and therefore are reluctant to accept or allow participation to occur at a level higher than number 3 of the above continuum.

One criticism of methods, such as Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA), is that they continue to evade the question of power relations. These methods still fail to challenge existing power relations in a village, and when the outsiders leave, existing, unequal relations remain. This is evident even in Viet Nam where the people benefiting most from village-level participation approaches are often those already in positions of power and influence.
Government officials may welcome people's participation in government-managed economic activities, but would no doubt be less accepting of open debate and freer expression of the people in political and social development.

However, if it is considered that the ultimate aim of development is to promote a better quality of life for all people, then both economic and political development are pillars that help achieve this. At the base of this structure is the development of each individual to be more confident and to take more responsibilities and initiatives. This is shown in the diagram below which shows the "building of development".

![Diagram of Development Structure]


2.4 Participation: A Balance between Government, Private Sector and Civil Society

The Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (MARD), in their draft "Programme of Rural Development" seem reluctant to support what it sees as spontaneous development. In the draft report, it is stated that this (spontaneous development) would take hundreds of years to achieve rural development and lead to negative impacts on the environment and social conflict. Rather, MARD feels that "rural development is the main work of rural people with active assistance of the government" (MARD, 1997:15-16).

The government's role in this model is to organise, guide and coordinate activities. There is still uncertainty among government officials to the degree of government intervention in this process. However, there is a recognition in the Draft Rural Development Programme that the private sector is better placed than government in areas such as the selection of goods and technology, setting production figures, and making market decisions (MARD, 1997:22).

If, however, the means of rural development is thought of as a three legged stool, then the government and private sector are only two of the stool's legs. The third leg is civil society - the collective and individual actions of citizens. To achieve development, all three legs need to be balanced, but at present the chair is lop-sided. Government agencies such as MARD are overly concerned with the government's role to apply top-down planning and control. While there is a growing recognition in Viet Nam of the role the private sector can play, little opportunity has yet been provided for civil society to reach its potential.
2.5 A Brief Overview of Participatory Approaches

The history of participatory approaches in development is relatively short. In the late 1970s, Rapid Rural Appraisal (RRA) became a popular method for collecting data from the field quickly, as a reaction to the time consuming and often inaccurate use of formal survey methods. RRA relies on an interdisciplinary team of outside experts who come into a community for a short period of time to extract information. This information is taken away and analysed and research or projects developed accordingly. Thus with RRA, the participation of the local people is limited to the sharing of their knowledge.

In the early 1990s, the techniques developed for RRA were adapted to a new method called Participatory Rural Appraisal or PRA. Although PRA uses many of the same methods, its aim is to involve local people directly in data collection and analysis. Ideally, PRA methods should involve local people at all stages of the project cycle: problem identification, analysis, design, monitoring and evaluation.

Another set of participatory techniques are SARAR which stands for Self-esteem, Associative strength, Resourcefulness, Action planning and Responsibility for follow-through. This is a set of methods developed by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the World Bank during the "Decade of Water" to better involve project beneficiaries in water and sanitation projects. During the Decade it was found that despite the disbursements of large amounts of funding, projects were not sustainable, for example, water pumps and wells were falling into disrepair because the local people had not been involved from the beginning in identifying needs and strategies. SARAR techniques are highly visual with most of the methods relying on the use of appropriate drawings. The central strategy is to develop group processes in order to optimise people’s ability to assess, prioritise, plan, organise, take initiatives and shoulder management responsibilities.

Although these different participatory approaches are often stated in terms of a set of methods which can be learnt and applied, underlying these methods is a common theme or philosophy which guides the selection and use of the methods. Elements of this philosophy are:

i. theories of adult learning;
ii. respecting local knowledge; and
iii. recognising difference and diversity.

2.5.1 Theories of Adult Learning

Recent adult learning theories highlight that people learn best when:

- the need for learning is directly relevant to the needs of the learner;
- a variety of methods are used, especially including visual and interactive methods;
- learning takes place in a relaxed and non-threatening environment; and
- learning is experiential (i.e. learning by doing).

In traditional learning methods the students are merely passive receivers of information “deposited” in their memory by a teacher. Recent theories stress the need for problem-posing education where teacher and student learn together and from each other. This is an extremely brief summary of these theories, yet they underpin the selection and application of many participatory techniques.

2.5.2 Respecting Local Knowledge

A question which is asked by practitioners of PRA is "whose reality counts?" In other words, whose value and belief systems are more reliable - the person who lives in poverty on a daily basis or the outsider who is offering assistance? The following table is useful in considering these issues:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What the outsider does know</th>
<th>What the outsider does not know</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What the local people know</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What the local people do not know</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In box 1 of the table is the knowledge that is shared in common; box 2 is the local, indigenous knowledge that outsiders do not know about local resources and events; box 3 is the knowledge which an outsider can bring, such as the availability of new technologies; and box 4 is the things that both groups are ignorant about.
Thus, participation has to involve the outsider learning from the local people about their local knowledge and wisdom (box 2). This is the first step. Only when the outsiders can appreciate local culture and knowledge can they offer information that they have (box 3). In this way participation is a two-way communication process. The role of the outsider is to facilitate the process, gradually withdrawing and letting local people take the lead themselves. The outsider in working with local people needs skills of patience and a willingness to listen.

Understandably, farmers may be resistant to outside information (box 3). This is interpreted by outsiders as the farmer's ignorance but farmers all over the world adopt their own unique coping strategies for survival and therefore find it difficult to accept information coming from outside that disrupts their strategies. In other cases the poor are much more rational than outsiders give them credit for and have very sound reasons for rejecting outside advice.

For instance, during research undertaken by the consultant, she was informed of several stories in which outsiders (be they the government or donors) were promoting the adoption of one cash crop or option for farmers, but farmers were resistant because they are well aware of the need to diversify their risks across several income earning and subsistence options.

Conversely, farmers may undervalue their own knowledge believing that the outsider has all the answers. This was the case in Ha Giang where farmers seemed to feel that only outside experts could solve their problems. When it was suggested that they would know the local conditions and needs much more than an outsider, they weren't convinced. This is a common phenomenon throughout the world where the poor develop low opinions of their own worth and ability, and internalise outside messages that their own knowledge and experience has no value (Burkey, 1993:51). Therefore, ways have to be found for both outsiders and locals to value the indigenous knowledge.

2.5.3 Recognising Differences and Diversity

RRA and PRA are also grounded in theories which recognise that within a community there will be a large degree of diversity in opinions, attitudes, experiences and needs. Diversity can be based on gender, age, ethnicity and wealth differences. Thus, while outsiders have to respect local knowledge, they must also be aware of the diversity of local knowledge. The elders will have historical knowledge, while women will know many things that the males in their community don't know such as birthing processes or collecting certain local herbs. The goal is to recognise and use this diversity rather than to try and simplify complexities. When the question is asked "whose reality counts", it has to be recognised that there is no "one reality", rather each reality is equally valid.

Therefore, it is important to talk to a variety of informants - men, women, young, old, rich and poor. At present, however, it is usually only local leaders who are consulted and these people tend to be the better-off males in the community.

2.6 Donor Experience with Participatory Approaches in Viet Nam

In recent years some exciting, participatory initiatives have been happening in Viet Nam. Most of these are being carried out by international donors, although national agencies such as the Rural Development Services Centre are also adopting these techniques. Many of these activities are still in their infancy so one recommendation of this report is to ensure that the process of these activities is well documented as case studies for the sharing of experiences. A few examples are given below.

PRA was first introduced to Viet Nam as a systematic tool for programme implementation in 1991 under the Viet Nam Sweden Forestry Cooperation Programme (VSFCP) in five provinces in the North of Viet Nam: Vinh Phu, Tuyen Quang, Ha Giang, Lao Cai and Yen Bai. In the first four years of this programme, the scope was limited to 70 villages. The lessons learnt in this project are informing participatory approaches in the Swedish International Development Agency's (SIDA) follow-up programme, the Viet Nam Sweden Mountain Rural Development Programme (MRDP).

The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), in its water and sanitation programme, is using SARAR techniques. It has translated and adapted SARAR materials into Vietnamese and these are being implemented by the Viet Nam Women's Union (VWU), although it has recently also started working with the Youth Union and Pioneer Council. Master trainers have been trained in all provinces and they are then responsible for training motivators at the commune level.
The OXFAM family are currently collaborating with the World Bank and Tra Vinh Provincial authorities in an activity entitled Process Participatory Planning (PPP). In this case, OXFAM UK/I approached the World Bank because of its interest in advocacy work in the Mekong region, and because it wished to prove to the larger multi-lateral agencies that participatory approaches do work. The World Bank was very supportive of this initiative which has been on-going now for less than one year. Under this project, the NGOs have firstly made a list of national consultants for the Bank to use so as to lessen their reliance on expatriate experts. NGO staff also brief Bank missions when they arrive in Viet Nam.

In Tuyen Quang Province the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) has a loan project, with technical assistance funded by UNDP, which relies on the use of PRA to communicate with and organise local villages. This project draws on lessons learnt from the VSFCP which included Tuyen Quang as one of its five provinces. Each village prepares a Village Development Plan based on a PRA intervention. This plan is submitted to a district-level Project Management Unit (PMU) for technical appraisal and is then passed on to the Province level PMU for finalisation and funding under the loan. However, despite having been running for three years, the project has encountered slow disbursement of funds to the villages and an over-zealous application of PRA with this being implemented in 420 villages in 1995 and 423 in 1996 (UNOPS, 1996:5). This had led to criticisms that PRA exercises are being conducted mechanically and repetitively. Practitioners have found this particularly stressful and there is an inability to process the data collected. IFAD currently has a similar project in Quang Binh and a third is being formulated in Ha Giang.

3. The Role of Vietnamese Institutions in Participation

The Government of Viet Nam relies heavily on state institutions to promote and implement their policies to mobilise the people. This has proven extremely successful in terms of creating economic growth and providing services such as health care, education and infrastructure throughout the country. With the move to doi moi, the role of many of these institutions has changed, although, in many cases, they have not yet adapted well enough to meet the needs of rural people in a market economy. In parts of the country, particularly remote areas, these institutions are still very strong, while in areas which are experiencing greater household economic growth, they are becoming more irrelevant to people’s daily lives.

The full opportunities offered by doi moi have not yet been taken up in the countryside, particularly in remote areas. While there seems to be some indication that new types of independent associations are springing up, such as production groups and marketing groups, this is still definitely very limited in provinces such as Ha Giang.

What are the potential roles of all these organisations - old and new - in promoting the participation of the rural population? How representative are they of the poor and disadvantaged? Will existing organisations adapt to the new demands? Or will new organisations emerge to take their place?

"The option to work through the political grassroots associations, the mass organisations, could limit the participatory approach because they are still political and have not been appropriated by the farmers as the organisations which could represent them in society." (van Broekboven 1996:31).

Yet on the other hand, these same organisations are in the process of redefining themselves so as to remain relevant to their membership. The Women's Union in particular, is showing its ability to adapt to changing needs, although these changes are not yet being felt nation-wide.

Below is a brief description of the current roles of these organisations based on interviews and group discussions held under this study.

3.1 People's Councils, People's Committees and Party Committees

People's Councils exist at the commune, district and province levels. Council members are elected from Party-nominated candidates. These members then appoint People's Committees to manage the day-to-day affairs.

Indeed, in many village discussions, people were unable to separate out many of these institutions when doing the institutional diagrams and often grouped together the Village Chief, Communist Party, People's Committee,
3.2 Cooperatives

In the past, the cooperative was an important rural institution which did the work of the State, particularly tax collection and Labour mobilisation. Throughout the country, however, the cooperative system has largely collapsed over the period since 1990 as it did not adapt to suit the new needs of farmers under a market economy. At the end of 1994 there were an estimated 16,243 cooperatives throughout the country, although some of these may have been fairly inactive. It seems that in the south the cooperatives never took hold the way that they did in the north, and currently in the south only an estimated 10% of farmers belong to cooperatives.

In most villages visited by the consultant, the cooperatives were not listed as important local institutions, although in Ha Giang, the consultant met with a village where the traditional cooperative was alive and well and was still the main village institution for collecting taxes and mobilising labour. The villagers spoken to were fully supportive of their cooperative although they disagreed over whether or not membership was voluntary. Nonetheless, the cooperative system is still regarded by the State as an important institution in rural development and economic growth. Therefore, the New Cooperatives Law was passed by the National Assembly on 20 March 1996 in order to revitalise the cooperative movement. The success of this law is yet to be measured. In parts of the country farmers are still critical of cooperatives and so will most likely be resistant to the re-establishment of these bodies under the new law.

Yet with the spread of doi moi and greater room for individual household economic development, it can be assumed that more and more households will want to cooperate in order to maximise their income. As stated by MARD in the Rural Development Programme, it is more natural, effective and efficient to allow farmers and traders to voluntarily establish their own support and interest groups (MARD, 1997:79). Farmers will come together if it is in their economic interest to do so, but they may choose to do so outside of the Cooperative Law.

3.3 Mass Organisations

In general, after Party Committees and village leaders, the mass organisations were usually seen by villagers as the most relevant institutions in their lives. Close to 90% of farmers in Ha Giang thought mass organisations were very important in their lives stating that:

"They play the same role in the society as the breadwinner in the family."
"Society without mass organisations is like baby chickens without their mother hen."
"Mass organisations are the Government's left and right hands."

Mass organisations have a strong membership base and reach down from national to province, district, commune, village and even hamlet levels. This makes them very effective at spreading information down the line of command. But it does not appear that this same chain is yet used to carry information and needs from the bottom up, although in theory this option obviously exists.

These organisations currently lack the ability to take a more participatory approach in communicating with members. For example, in Ha Giang the mass organisations spoken with still described their roles in terms of top-down processes of mobilising people, passing on information, assisting with the provision of farm inputs, assisting households more in need or providing role models. Never was it stated that their role was one of representing the interests of their members to higher authorities.

In Ha Giang, 80% of villagers believed that the role of mass organisations had changed under doi moi. The main change has been away from pure propaganda dissemination to assisting with economic activities such the provision of seeds, fertilisers and credit. In fact, it would appear that in this regard the mass organisations are fulfilling the role of the cooperatives.
3.3.1 Viet Nam Women's Union

With few exceptions, villagers (men and women) believed that the VWU was the most important of the mass organisations, usually followed by the Farmers' Union. The VWU also appears to be the "mass Organisation of choice" for the donor community. It is used widely by donors to disseminate credit and is favoured because it has a good reputation and track record. The VWU has also been recruited by donors to work in non-gender specific areas such as biogas and solar energy projects.

One reason that the VWU has earned such a high reputation is most likely because it is run by women! Traditionally women take on community management roles, firstly, because it is often seen as an extension of their reproductive and household work, and secondly, because of the perceived elasticity of women's time. One drawback for women is that they, more than men, tend to provide their labour for little or no remuneration, although there was a sense among some informants that the women are less enthusiastic to implement schemes in which they do not benefit either financially or through indirect benefits such as preferential treatment in receiving loans.

The VWU has a membership of approximately 11 million women and membership has continued to grow over recent years because of the opportunities now provided through the VWU for women to access credit. The VWU is still very much in the process of redefining itself - is it a project implementor, a mass Organisation, a policy advice Organisation or research institution? At present it is trying to wear all these hats although, at the national level, several initiatives are on-going within the Union to try and strategically identify its niche.

3.3.2 The Farmers' Union

The Farmers' Union has approximately seven million member households nationwide. Membership is based on households rather than individuals, yet men seem to dominate despite the fact that women do more than 60% of all agricultural production work in rural areas.

The Union's mission is to communicate to Government the concerns of farmers and to organise services for farmers. This is interesting in that it indicates a bottom-up approach to communication from the farmers to the policy-makers. However, in Ha Giang, it was still not clear, even after speaking to several members, how the Farmers' Union in the province intended to meet these goals. Like the VWU, but to a lesser degree, it is also implementing loans through the Bank for the Poor.

In some villages the Farmers' Union is the entry point for Government programmes such as the Poverty Alleviation and Barren Hills programmes, but its role seemed to be fairly limited.

3.3.3 The Youth Union

The Youth Union is less active in the rural areas, particularly compared to its role in the war years. In one village the low membership of the Youth Union was explained in terms of a lack of young people in the village. Many of them have moved to nearby towns in search of work. In one village in Ha Giang, where the Youth Union was active, it stated that its main work was to assist by providing labour to households where labour was short or members were ill.

3.4 Informal Groups

At present there is no legal framework for local NGOs, although at the central level some research organisations linked to government agencies are carrying out work similar to NGOs. However, there does not appear to be any indication that well-structured community based organisations are forming in rural areas.

Some new groups are forming under project intervention, such as under the Swedish and IFAD projects which promote the formation of groups to implement Village Plans. In some cases, villagers have been given the choice as to whether or not to use existing institutions or form new groups to implement the Plans. Usually they prefer to have a new group as existing groups have specific mandates. In villages visited that had been involved in the VSFCP, these new groups were considered as very Important by villagers, although their membership was often drawn from existing village leaders and is largely dominated by men.

There has also been a reported rise of local interest and self-help groups. Many of these groups are informal and may disband when they have completed their purpose. In the south, farmers are forming interest groups
more so than in the north, in order to share resources, buy production inputs, or acquire loans collectively. These groups are formed purely for economic purposes and there does not appear to be any groups forming for social or political reasons.

In Ha Giang, leaders at province, district and village level were unable to identify any such informal groups and one of the province officials stated that “farmers are passive and if they are not given guidelines they don’t take action”. However, in village interviews the consultant discovered groups forming for labour exchange, such as rice harvesting and tea picking, and along professional lines, such as a group of brick-makers².

One example of self-initiated, self-help groups was in a village where all the villagers had recently moved to the area, having previously been government or state-farm employees. Here they had what they called “homeland groups” with people who came from the same areas helping each other. Nonetheless, in Ha Giang much mutual help and cooperation was still happening under the framework of the cooperatives or the mass organisations rather than as independent initiatives.

The consultant did expect to find groups forming along ethnic divisions, especially in villages which had a mix of different ethnic groups, but despite individual interviews and group workshop discussions, any such examples were not found. The reason for this, however, may be that either firstly, people did not conceive of these types of informal groups as relevant to the consultant’s research (although the question was probed and phrased in a multitude of different ways); or secondly, it may be that the villagers are reluctant to discuss with outsiders, any informal structures-which fall outside of the Government sanctioned institutions.

In another village which had a strong cooperative structure still in place, the villagers had started self-management groups within the last year under the existing cooperative system. Each group was made up of four to five households per group. The role of the groups is to help protect each other and provide labour, but not financial assistance, for events such as weddings and funerals. There was disagreement amongst the groups as to whether membership to these groups was voluntary or not. The impression seemed to be that it may be considered compulsory, but people can choose to be active or inactive. When the question was asked why the villagers had started the groups, the Cooperative Chair stated that:

"We received guidelines from the top-down informing us that we had the right to form these groups."

This comment seemed to indicate that they would be reluctant to form any group if it was not sanctioned by the Government.

3.5 Extension Services

Extensive services are a fairly new structure in Viet Nam. The decree to set up extension services was only passed in 1993 and centres began to be set up in 1994 at the province and district levels. Extension officers at these levels are full-time employees and most met by the consultant were graduates from one of the several agricultural institutes. At the commune level, local farmers may be contracted by the district centre to work as an extension officer on a seasonal contract. In Ha Giang, commune level extension officers receive VND250,000 during the months that they are contracted to work.

The extension services face a multitude of problems. There is an inadequate number of staff with a national ratio of extension officers to farming households of 1:50,000. The officers are often trained in specific areas such as coffee growing or fruit tree growing and this can limit the advice that they give to farmers. Further, there are no incentives linked to the quality or quantity of services provided by the officers. It is also difficult for staff to travel to remote communes as the services lack funding for per diems or petrol. Even in villages close to the provincial capital in Ha Giang, local people felt that they were rarely visited by extension officers and other government officials.

There are indications that in parts of the country richer farmers can pay for, and therefore monopolise, extension services so the poorer households are missing out on vital services. Even though several female extension officers were met, in the main men dominate and, in terms of services provided, it is male farmers rather than female farmers who benefit most.
4. Opportunities and Constraints for People’s Participation

4.1 Opportunities

4.1.1 Government Policy Framework

The Viet Nam Government has a strong commitment to involving people in development which is highlighted in several government reports and documents. For instance, the Report to the World Summit on Social Development in 1995 stated that the Government's strategy is to “place human beings at the centre of development and to promote the potential of individuals and communities...”

In Viet Nam, this support for people's participation is not surprising. Particularly in the North, there is a strong heritage of collective spirit and assistance, springing in part from the hardship of the war years. There are also several popular political quotes which emphasise the importance of the people, for instance Ho Chi Minh said that in order to create a successful revolution the People's Army had to “live with the people, work with the people and learn from the people”. The present government often talks of development occurring by creating an environment where "people know, people discuss, people do, people control". Moreover, the government often reiterates the policy that "the Party guides, the Government manages and the people own".

4.1.2 Doi Moi

The Government's renovation or doi moi policy, begun in 1986, also provides more room for people to take part in their own economic development. The effect of this policy is naturally more apparent in areas close to markets and transportation and with greater access to technical knowledge and inputs.

In general, the full potential of doi moi has still not been reached. In part, this would appear to be because, while farmers have been given access to land to develop on a household basis, the Government still controls to a large extent production decisions and access to resources. In areas in the north, for instance, farmers may have been allocated land that was part of a State Tea Plantation, therefore, they have little choice but to continue producing tea. In other villages that were visited, farmers had been given resources in-kind such as seeds to grow orange trees or coffee and the necessary inputs of fertilisers and pesticides for these crops. They then also rely on the State to act as the main market for their produce through formal or informal commitments by Government officials to buy their produce. In the Red River and Mekong Deltas, a majority of farmers are limited to rice-growing due to the suitability of local conditions to rice and the Government's commitment to nation-wide food security.

4.1.3 Decentralisation and Administration Reform

At present the Government is going through a process of decentralisation and is also implementing administrative reforms in various provinces and across several line agencies, including MARD. Part of this process has been the passing of the new budget law which in principle delegates budget decisions to the provinces, districts and communes. However, the budget law has only yet been partially implemented.

It is too early yet to see the impact of these reforms but, if well implemented, they have potential for institutional changes that could allow people better representation and a greater say in decisions that affect their lives. Participatory approaches have been found to foster the decentralisation and delegation of authority and, therefore, will be an important strategy for assisting in these processes.

It would seem that provincial and district level authorities do not yet fully understand the implications of both these reforms. Decentralisation will give greater power and resources to the provinces and districts, but if decentralisation is not accompanied by greater use of participatory planning and grassroots consultation, it will be an opportunity lost. Similarly, administrative reform should encourage greater participation and responsibility of government officials at all levels in decision-making. Leaders at these levels will need new skills in areas such as financial and human resource management, participatory planning and project design, monitoring and evaluation.

4.1.4 Tradition of Helping Others and Mobilisation

At the village level there is a tradition of helping others in need although this is often structured through formal organisations such as the mass organisations. People are also used to contributing money and labour when called upon to do so, such as to help poor students, families of those wounded or killed in the war and the elderly, although resentments occur when people feel that their contributions are not accountable. In remote
areas, this reliance on mobilisation is still strong but, in other areas, households are focusing more on their own individual economic gains so may be less willing to be mobilised in State-organised activities.

4.1.5 Extensive Networks of Institutions

Viet Nam has an extensive and, to a large degree, active, network of Party and political organisations and mass organisations from the central to the grassroots level. This provides the potential for encouraging community development initiatives and for feeding back into political decision-making. The main weakness at this stage is the lack of two-way communication in this network. The role of these organisations may also continue to wane in the face of a supply and demand driven economy. Thus, they have to learn to become "demand" driven bodies responding to their members' needs.

4.1.6 Availability of Resources: Land, Labour, Literacy and Infrastructure

In village meetings, participants consistently listed their most enabling resources as land and labour. They felt these two resources enabled them to develop economically. In addition to these two resources, is also the relatively high rate of literacy in Viet Nam which enables the government to pass on information successfully.

Poor infrastructure such as electricity and roads was often seen by the villagers as a constraint which is definitely the case. However, given Viet Nam's low GNP, infrastructure development is comparatively good and electricity to 80% of Viet Nam means the majority of the population do have access to information on television and radio. This in turn has the potential to provide farmers with some access to information in areas such as market needs and new technologies and farming techniques.

4.1.7 Officials' Commitment to Development

Despite low wages and poor working conditions, many provincial and district officials are enthusiastic and committed to assisting the poor. They are, therefore, usually open to new ideas and initiatives. Officials have also been advised from central level to motivate the participation of the people so they are open to suggestions on how best to achieve this. This of course is a generalisation which may not apply to all officials, but it is reassuring to know that many officials are hard-working and committed and are an ideal target for promoting new initiatives.

4.1.8 Willingness of People to Participate

Many villagers may never before have been asked their opinion, especially women, as province and district officials are likely to only consult commune and village leaders, who are more often than not, men. However, in the experience of the various projects using methods such as PRA, when consulted, people are enthusiastic. The consultant's research found those from villages that had never had a project intervention more reticent in group meetings and that they deferred more to their community leaders. However, once given a chance to speak and asked for their opinion, they were forthcoming. It was found that women had more opportunity to give opinions in women-only group activities as, in mixed groups, they were nearly always dominated by the men.

The majority of farmers believe that the better-off households are more active because they are clever, more adaptive and have money and labour, although some also stated that the poorest are active because they are more interested than the better-off in improving their communities.

4.1.9 People are Convinced through Experience

Participation in their own decision-making is a difficult concept to convey to people who have never experienced it, but trainers, leaders and villagers who have had exposure to participatory approaches are usually convinced by what they experience. As the VSFCP is the longest running experiment in participatory approaches, it is easiest to measure its impact. In many cases leaders involved in this programme are more supportive of community consultation as they realise that they get better results if people themselves own the decision-making - this includes voting on their own representatives - rather than having decisions imposed upon them.

4.2 Constraints
4.2.1 Lack of a Common Definition and Concept of Participation

As mentioned in Section 1, Introduction, there is a difference in how different people conceive participation. It is a word that is used in a variety of contexts, for instance, one may listen to someone speak at a workshop and this is described as "participating in the workshop". In talking with Vietnamese officials and grassroots people, it was apparent that they usually use participation in terms of levels 1 and 3 of the continuum (see page 3). That is, passive participation such as listening to a higher authority pass on information (level 1), and mobilisation of labour and financial contributions through government and mass organisations (level 3).

Within the current focus on participation through mass mobilisation, people still have choice. There is room for them to ignore instructions, to miss meetings or to carry out work halfheartedly if they are not committed to the task. But such choice does not lead to the creative energy and empowerment that one would like to achieve through self-motivated participation.

In Viet Nam there is still little comprehension of what participation through personal development and self-motivation would be like and indeed whether this would be a desirable thing to have. In order for officials and grassroots people to gain an insight into participation through self-motivation, they will of course need to experience it first hand through participatory training courses or participatory planning exercises. Only through experience can a change in attitude and acceptance occur.

In the Swedish project it has been found that "indirectly PRA was a factor in changing individual and institutional thinking, as well as how people and organisations functioned". (Paul: 2). The villages that were visited that had participated in PRA had a better idea of what this involved in terms of their particular project. However, as yet, the impact seems limited to those in the village more directly involved in the project, and an understanding of using these same processes in a broader context beyond the project framework has not yet taken hold.

Given a lack of a common definition of "participation", confusion has arisen in several instances. In the IFAD project in Tuyen Quang, a household questionnaire was developed and was incorrectly referred to as a "PRA" method. In another example, one informant said that they attended a normal workshop but it had been called a "PRA Workshop".

4.2.2 Resource Constraints: Markets, Education, Information, Production Inputs

Clearly, those who are the poorest have the least human, financial and in-kind resources to spend on participating in village-level activities or in taking risks or initiatives. If they are living hand to mouth, they have no time or energy to put into these processes. Even attending a village meeting is taking time that they may need to tend their crops or animals.

Villagers that were met usually listed their greatest constraint as a lack of funds, followed by a lack of agricultural inputs such as seeds and fertilisers, a lack of information on new technologies or varieties, and in remote areas they faced poor roads and limited access to markets.

4.2.3 Dependency on the State

Viet Nam has clearly achieved a great deal through top-down structures that reach the heart of each village and hamlet. Yet the consultant's research in Ha Giang found that this also creates a problem of dependency on the State. Villagers are used to being told what to grow, what inputs they need and so on. Thus, they have come to expect the State to continue to provide technical information, inputs and resources, and to also act as their main buyer.

Related to this issue, is the reliance on top-down communication at all levels. In the villages in Ha Giang it seemed nearly inconceivable that actions could be taken outside of these structures. In one village however, people gave the example that if a farmer wished to grow flowers to sell in the nearby province capital rather than oranges (as instructed by the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (DARD)), then they felt that this would be okay, although no existing examples in the village were available.

Nearly 60% of the interviewees in Ha Giang saw the participation of local people occurring at the first level of the continuum - i.e. passive participation. Women more so than men believed this, while only two out of 19 men thought participation in their village was self-motivated.

4.2.4 Lack of Skills in Problem Analysis
The groups met in Ha Giang were asked to list major problems and constraints to their participation in community and rural development. Firstly, these were always addressed in economic terms and mainly related to issues of production. Further, rather than stating the constraint as a problem, it was nearly always stated as a "lack of a Government service". For instance, rather than saying that they faced poor health or malnutrition, the problem was stated as the lack of a health centre; or rather than seeing the problem as low productivity, the problem was seen as a lack of funding and inputs, such as seeds and fertiliser.

By defining problems so narrowly, people then limit the solutions that they see before them. Thus, if the problem is a lack of a service, then the only solution that easily presents itself is for the government to provide this service. For true community development to occur, people need to be able to identify their problems more broadly. For instance, if the problem is identified as low agriculture production or low incomes, then a broader range of solutions can include more locally conceived and implemented strategies such as diversifying crops, improving irrigation, sharing of common resources or joining together for the marketing of produce.

4.2.5 Lack of Accountability of Representational Bodies

Obviously, every citizen does not have the time nor the interest to participate in every decision that influences their lives. In these instances, there needs to be accountable mechanisms and transparency of processes, clear channels of representation and means of making complaints, so that people at least feel confident that their interests are being looked after and well-represented.

However, there has been some recent unrest throughout the country, arising mainly from grassroots dissatisfaction with the accountability of those who are meant to represent their interests. One Vietnamese official explained that previously cooperatives were responsible for prioritising and planning contributions to local needs through open meetings of their membership but, with the decline in cooperatives, these decisions are being made more by local leaders with little or no consultation. This has most likely created the space for greater corruption at the local level and a few people met complained that they were not certain how their financial contributions were being distributed and used.

In one case, the Youth Union official told the consultant that he had been asked by the district-level Youth Union to collect funds from members so that they could be eligible for a loan. But after a year or so they have not received any loan or acknowledgment of how their funds were spent.

4.2.6 Need For Institutional Support

Many of the activities of donors, particularly NGOs, focus on the participation of grassroots people, but there is a growing recognition that if these processes are to be sustainable, officials at all levels have to be informed and supportive. For instance, extension officers may be trained in participatory methods but may lack the institutional support of their peers and superiors once they are back in their workplace.

In such cases, the trainees fall back on traditional practices rather than developing and using their new skills. The end goal should be that, not only would officials support the use of participatory methods, but that they also adopt some of these approaches in their own day-to-day work.

4.2.7 Difficult to Change Long-Held Beliefs

One lesson learnt through using PRA in Viet Nam and elsewhere is that it is relatively easy to teach the methods and tools but the process of changing people's attitudes and behaviour takes much longer. However, knowledge and skills in using the methods are usually necessary to create the opportunity which may lead to changes in attitudes.

This has implications for the scaling up of participatory approaches in Viet Nam. One of the major bottlenecks that a few informants identified will be the ability to train sufficient numbers of practitioners with an understanding of both participatory philosophy and methods. It will take several years to build a core of practitioners in participatory approaches with the confidence and capacity to pass their skills on.

Change is going to have to take place slowly and systematically, giving sufficient time for trainees and officials to fully grasp concepts. Yet one mistake often made is to try to train too many practitioners in too short a period of time and to try to cover too many villages or communes.

4.2.8 Community Development Is Hard Work and Time Consuming
Working with local communities to develop their own capacities, confidence and motivation is a long-term commitment. It involves repeated visits over a long period of time by the community development worker. To really reach the poorest of the poor, the worker has to travel to remote and inaccessible areas and stay for periods of time in local villages. When in the villages, they may have to work for long hours conducting interviews or group activities. This would not suit everybody and without some form of remuneration, many people may find it difficult to remain motivated. In addition, women with family responsibilities will find it harder to commit time away from their families, and some agencies have reported incidences of sexual harassment of their female field workers.

Despite this need for time and flexibility, the Government and international donors are usually under pressure to be output oriented and to disburse funds and services quickly. They are therefore often reluctant to include the time needed for group formation and community development within a project.

4.2.9 Lack of Government Staff and Funding

To date projects such as the VSFCP have relied on government staff, often extension staff, at the province and district level to implement participatory planning techniques. NGOs on the other hand tend to draw more on their own existing staff.

Whether or not donors should pay extra money to Government staff through honorariums, per diems or lunch money is a contentious issue in Viet Nam. Many donors feel it is necessary to ensure the success of their projects. OXFAM UK/I will usually give lunch money to participants within a village as they have found that if they don’t, they may be discriminating against the poorest farmers. The poorest members of a village are those least able to afford to give up a day of work to attend a workshop.

Other donors, such as the UNICEF are very clear that they see the participation of government staff and participants as part of the counterpart contribution. In its water and sanitation programme, for instance, UNICEF believes that project staff are still motivated without any financial return and that they are rewarded in other ways such as through gaining priority to loans, training opportunities and simple award ceremonies.

If the Government intends to carry out participatory approaches similar to those of international donors through its own networks, it faces the dual constraints of lack of funding and low staff numbers.

Because of low salaries, extension officers and other government staff have to have side-line activities to generate income. If they go into the field for several days then this is time away from what may be their main income-earning activity. It is thus difficult enough for these staff to provide technical support and training to their clients before they even consider adopting more time-consuming participatory approaches.

4.2.10 Identifying Community Development Workers or "Motivators"

The above two points raise the issue of who then is best placed to be trained in community development and participatory approaches so as to implement these methods in the field. Leaders are not necessarily the best people for this. It depends on the skills, motivation and enthusiasm of the individual. Extension staff are an obvious choice (and they are used by international donors), but constraints on their time were mentioned above. Another option may be to train local members of the Youth Union or other young people as community "motivators". The advantages are that they may be reasonably well educated, have no family commitments and may be driven by ideological and humanitarian beliefs. They may also have grown up in the doi moi period and be more open to change. One shortcoming may be their age and whether or not they would be well-respected within communities.

5. Gender Inequalities in Rural Development

5.1 Barriers to Women's Participation

A good indication of whether participation is occurring and if the more disadvantaged are being reached is to look at the participation of women. If women's participation in economic, political and social activities, and decision-making is high, then the process is working well. Yet, even in projects that appear to be doing well at the community level, often women are still missing out. One example was given of a NGO-based project where gender training was provided to try to correct the imbalance, but project staff who were promoting participatory approaches were still resistant to the ideas of women's participation.
One thing was clear in the interviews - women's participation in economic development is vital. Women do most of the agricultural and household work. They also play an important role in community work such as cleaning canals and road building. Yet women are still not participating in local political decisions.

5.1.1 Social Expectations and Stereotypes

As witnessed in the consultant's village visits, women clearly face greater constraints than men in participating in economic, social and decision-making activities. Above all else, the greatest constraints are cultural attitudes, social expectations, stereotypes and roles placed on women which limit them throughout their life cycle, from birth onwards. These attitudes are often held equally by men and women. In Vietnamese society women are taught to be more passive than men and this is very obvious in group meetings where women will defer to men to speak. This passivity and lack of confidence appears to be even greater among ethnic minority women. In mixed-sex groups that the consultant worked with, the men controlled the resources (pen and paper) and dominated discussions. This contrasted with women-only groups where women were more active and out-spoken.

The survey on Women and Integrated Pest Management states that:

"the attitude towards the participation of women and the value of their participation is usually still 'stereotyped' by men. The abilities of women are always underestimated, as men only see the 'disadvantages' of women such as: 'women can not understand quickly'; 'women are not active'; and 'women have a low educational level'." (Centre for Family and Women's Studies (CFWS): 21)

All of the following points are offered as constraints on women's role in development and decision-making. However, all of these constraints stem from this central issue of cultural and social expectations and stereotyping. Each point highlights the fact that in the Government's drive to improve rural development, female farmers are more poorly positioned than men to take advantage of economic growth, particularly ethnic women and women who are single (because of divorce, non-marriage, widowhood or male migration). A survey in Nam Ha province showed that 40% of single women lived in poverty compared with the average poverty rate of 25%.

5.1.2 Education

When men and women were asked what was the greatest constraint women faced, they often gave low education as the primary reason. However, it is arguable whether or not this is the main reason. In many cases it may be true, but it is also an easy excuse which allows the status quo to continue. It is also not fully supported by the statistics which show that women, while having less education than men, have similar attendance at primary school (87% attendance rates for both boys and girls in rural areas). This falls off at lower secondary school with 58% of girls and 72% of boys in rural areas attending lower secondary school. The major male/female gaps in education exist in people above 45 years.

The accuracy of these statistics, as any statistics, is debatable, but still the fact remains that a high percentage of women are just as educated as many of the men around them and yet are still not taking on many leadership roles or being involved in decision-making through meetings and other mechanisms at the village, district, province or national levels.

Having said all this, of course girls are not yet fully equal to boys in education. Parents often see the opportunity costs of educating a girl as too high. Girls can stay home to look after siblings or do household and productive chores. There is a saying in Vietnamese that "your daughters are somebody else's children". Daughters marry out of the family so this is an added disincentive for families to spent money on an education for girls.

5.1.3 Leadership and Decision-Making

Women are still under-represented in formal decision-making processes. This year the number of women in the National Assembly increased markedly from 19% to 26%, but at the local levels women's representation is considerably lower. In the People's Councils, women make up 20% of representatives at the province level, 18% at district level and 14% at commune level.

Within People's Committees, usually women are represented only by the head of the VWU. Therefore, at meetings when important issues are being discussed that concern women such as land allocation or taxation, only one woman is there to represent all the women in the commune (CFWS:22).
The contradiction is that many women in leadership positions in the VWU are doing wonderfully and are well-respected in these positions. So if women can perform well within the framework of the VWU, why aren't these women or women of equal calibre also making it to more mainstream decision-making positions?

Within the household there is often the concept that women dominate in decision-making, and in terms of day-to-day decisions this seems to be true. Within the household women tend to manage the budget, but larger decisions are either shared with the husband or the husband makes the final decision. In three villages surveyed under the Integrated Pest Management (IPM) project, husbands tended to make decisions on agricultural production such as buying crop varieties, fertilisers and pesticides. Overall women made 64% of expenditure decisions, men 13%, and 23% of the decisions were made jointly (CFWS:19).

**5.1.4 Division of Labour**

A key to understanding women's inequality is to understand the current gendered division of labour in Vietnam. This division occurs at two levels. Firstly, within the household women are limited by expectations that they must take major responsibility for domestic and childcare work in the family, in addition to their productive work. Meanwhile men are able to attend meetings, network and socialise because they have a wife taking care of family and household responsibilities.

The second division occurs within the productive workforce where work is often segregated along gender lines. It is estimated that in Vietnam women carry out between 60 to 70% of the agricultural workload in addition to their household duties. Women tend to be involved more than men in planting, weeding, transporting water and firewood, animal husbandry and harvesting, while men traditionally do the ploughing. When asked about gender differences in participation, province leaders and villagers in Ha Giang usually recognised the greater role women play in the agricultural workload.

This multiple burden faced by women means that in general they work at least two hours more than men each day. In turn they have less time for attending meetings, and for networking and socialising.

In many rural areas men migrate seasonally to find work. This leaves women with total responsibility for farm production, and in such cases women usually do the traditional male job of ploughing. Figures vary but it is estimated that approximately 50% of rural households are female-headed for some part of the year due to male out-migration.

Women farmers have less access than male farmers to farm technology, technical knowledge, savings and operating capital. A study of female-headed households in Vinh Phu found that the output in these households was about 25% below the community average, as they lacked inputs such as labour and draft animals.

Under the cooperative system, women and men earned work points for both productive and reproductive work. With the collapse of cooperatives and focus on the household economy under doi moi, the household work of women no longer has a perceived economic value. More traditional values are being reasserted in the family and the relative independence and equality women may have experienced under the cooperative system is declining. This has been translated into a loss of power and status for rural women.

In talking about the gendered division of labour, Vietnamese people that were spoken with often said that "men do the heavy work and women do the light work". But obviously this is a cultural perception out of touch with reality. As stated above, women can and do very heavy work such as ploughing, construction work, road building and carrying heavy loads long distances.

**5.1.5 Land Allocation**

When the 1988 Land Law was first introduced, single women were not considered eligible for land certificates. The VWU was successful in lobbying for a woman's right to have land issued in her own name. However, certificates are still only issued in one name - usually the male head of the household. This has implications for women's rights in divorce and inheritance as well as their access to credit and extension services.

In some locations, 30 to 100% of land distributed under the Land Law has been taken back by local authorities as the farmers could not fulfill assigned output contracts. Most of the households to lose their land have been female-headed (Tran, 1997:91).

**5.1.6 Training**
When training opportunities do arise, women are much less likely to access this training. Firstly, because they are simply overlooked and secondly, because women have less ability and time to travel outside of the village. Further, in the IPM project, it was found that family support is vital to enable women to attend training.

"Whether females can attend this kind of training depends on the attitudes of the husband. I am lucky, because my husband understands me and my desire for ‘improvements’." (CFWS:24)

Further, in this project it was found that the list of trainees was put together by the local leader who did not necessarily value women's participation. In other cases, when quotas were set for the number of women participants, these quotas were not met because of:

"...the lack of a detailed discussion with women, insufficient information supplied in the training for women so they decide better whether to go and there are no appropriate ways to motivate women to attend..."(CFWS:27)

Having female trainers running a course has a positive influence on both women's participation and on male attitudes towards women's abilities.

5.1.7 Off-Farm Rural Labour

The Government's strategy is to strengthen rural development and rural industrialisation and this will have continued impacts on men's and women's opportunities to engage in off-farm labour. Two types of off-farm labour can be identified: (1) home-based informal work and outwork; and (2) work in emerging rural industries. With regard to informal work, women make up an estimated 70% of all informal labour and out-workers. On one hand this type of work gives women flexibility to juggle paid and unpaid work, but it also means that they lack social contact, are exposed to greater occupational health risks and lack access to social benefits and protection under the labour laws.

Similarly, employment in newly emerging State-owned Enterprises (SOEs) and private businesses also offer opportunities for women to work, but women's mobility in search of work is more limited than men's. They are less likely to travel great distances for work. Yet the evidence is that women are already dominating in many of these rural industries. In many SOEs and foreign joint ventures that employ mainly women, research has found overwhelming evidence of poor levels of hygiene, contact with toxic substances, noise, heat, long hours and monotonous work to be major problems (Tran, 1997:118-125).

Women are often the preferred labour in many emerging industries as employers believe that they can pay women lower wages, and that women are more passive so less likely to complain about poor working conditions. One example, in Thai Binh province is an SOE which produces ceramics. The employees are mainly women and, because of poor economic management, the women have not been paid for five months. Yet the women continue to turn up to work each day. Would a group of male workers be as tolerant?

5.2 Women in MARD

Nationwide, women make up 51% of all employees in MARD, but no breakdown is available in terms of where these women are placed. In general though, women dominate in the State farms and 425 SOEs of MARD.

At the central, provincial and district levels, very few women are in decision-making positions. Mrs Nguyen Thi Bich Lien is both the Deputy Chair of the Personnel Department and Vice Chair of the Committee for the Advancement of Women within MARD. She stated that as women do the majority of agricultural work, efforts to promote women can only have a positive effect on rural development. She believes that women in MARD lack confidence so they need to be made more aware of their abilities, while men have to become more sensitive about women's needs and abilities. Having women in higher positions in MARD is a necessary step so that they can act as a role model to encourage other women, yet she said that men often see the promotion of women as a threat to their own position.

Similarly now women are needed at the field level and as extension officers, as women in these positions will related better to and have a better understanding of the situation of female farmers.
6. Recommendations

The following recommendations for increasing the practice of participatory approaches and gender sensitivity in rural development are written to address the three different objectives of Phase I of the project VIE/96/008 Strengthening the Capacity of MARD. These three objectives are to:

- develop a National Programme for Rural Development;
- design and prepare a project document to strengthen the capacity for the renewal of rural development to support the implementation of the National Programme; and
- prepare a training programme to strengthen rural leadership at commune/village level.

6.1 Develop a National Programme for Rural Development

In reviewing the draft Rural Development Programme of MARD, three questions arise in relationship to participation of the rural poor men and women. These are:

- What is the role of MARD in promoting participatory and gender-sensitive approaches to development?
- What institutional changes are needed in order to carry out this role?
- How can the participation of women, both within MARD and within general rural development, be strengthened?

6.1.1 The Role of MARD in Promoting Participatory and Gender-Sensitive Approaches to Development

MARD, as a centralised government authority, cannot be expected to be directly involved in the application of grassroots participatory processes. Rather its role is to provide an enabling environment for initiatives from the grassroots to occur independently. This can be done by setting appropriate policies and guidelines and by strengthening MARD at the provincial and district levels. The processes of decentralisation and administrative reform are a step in the right direction, but how this will occur needs to be more clearly articulated in the Programme of Rural Development. At present, Government documents in general refer to the importance of people's participation but no concrete mechanism for achieving this has been outlined.

The current structure of the draft Programme of Rural Development still focuses on top-down processes and the role of Government. The section within the draft on "Rural Society" is very brief (MARD, 1996:11) and the discussion focuses solely on top-down processes. A separate chapter could therefore be included to detail activities in rural development not directly related to the Government. This could include:

- the current structure of rural society;
- how the MARD foresees the role of the private sector and civil society in promoting rural development; and
- what the role of the MARD at various levels is to facilitate this process.

Despite references to people's participation, there appears to be resistance within the draft report to civil society activities. On page 17 of the document it states that "...agriculture and rural area cannot be developed outside the act of national institution and policy". This statements under-estimates the importance that the private sector and civil society can and do play, and also how the move to decentralise will lessen the direct role of national institutions.

This statements under-estimates the importance that the private sector and civil society can and do play, and also how the move to decentralise will lessen the direct role of national institutions.

Staff at central, province and district levels do not comprehend what decentralisation and administrative reform will entail or how to increase people's participation. They are aware that these issues are priorities of the Government but are not clear on what this means for them and how to implement it in their work. Therefore greater training and awareness raising of these officials is necessary in areas such as:

- What is participation and community development? Why it is important?;
- Promoting greater consultation and two-way communication with the grassroots constituency;
- Participatory planning;
- Using consultation and participation for project design and management; and
- How to lessen farmer dependency on the State and encourage greater self-motivation.

These officials are also still reliant on top-down direction so they should be given (and made aware that they have) greater autonomy at the local level. With this increased autonomy will come an increased need to be accountable to both their superiors and their constituencies.
MARD should initiate means to promote local endeavours such as rewarding progressive local leaders and communities. Success stories could be made into case studies and information about these successes could be spread by media, publications or in-country study tours.

Training should also include greater skills at all levels in problem analysis and objective-oriented project design. Currently, projects are conceived of as infrastructural outputs such as road, bridge or dam building (MARD, 1996:5 & 118-119). Such projects are useful but fail to tackle the root causes of rural poverty. They also leave little room for grassroots people to identify and prioritise their own needs. Under the output-oriented projects proposed under the Programme, people's participation will continue to be limited to the contribution of labour and money to a project decided by others.

6.1.2 Institutional Changes needed to fulfil this Role

As mentioned, a major strength of rural institutions is the depth and breadth of Government and mass organisations from the central to the grassroots level. But closer examination is needed to see how these organisations can be transformed to be more “demand driven” to meet the needs of farmers in a market economy. While it is out of the scope of the MARD to affect change within many of the organisations, it can bring institutional change to the DARD, extension services and cooperatives.

Within the Rural Development Programme there is an implicit assumption that existing organisations already have skills needed to carry forward the programme. Yet this is clearly not the case and much institutional analysis, reform and training will be needed. This could be made more detailed in the programme and expanded in Phase II of the project.

Training is often seen as a panacea to creating change, but training in itself is not sufficient. At best it can change the thinking of a few trainees who then return to the workplace where the old structures and processes are in place.

A long-term process of strategic planning and review is needed. MARD’s leadership has to be able to plan strategically, to develop long- and short-term goals and then to ensure that institutional structures are in place to achieve these. Participation of MARD staff in these processes is vital, with leaders providing the momentum and being ready to listen to the advice of their subordinates.

Moreover, MARD has to institute policies and opportunities for new informal structures to flourish. At present farmers believe this is not supported by Government and therefore are reluctant to operate outside of formal mechanisms. New organisations are needed to spring up to meet immediate needs at the grassroots such as farmers coming together to assist with production and marketing or groups forming to fix health or irrigation problems. At present traditional organisations such as the Farmers’ Union do not appear to be meeting this need adequately. Current structures are not representing the people well - they are more involved in presenting the government perspective to the people.

Farmers, if giving forced contributions, require accountability. They need to have a say in how funds are allocated and need to be able to see the benefits. Lack of accountability will lead to resentment of the rural poor and possible further unrest throughout the country. If farmers are being asked to give large parts of income and labour, they need to also be involved in how their contribution is used. Feedback on how money is used could be provided by leadership on local radio, posters or at public meetings.

6.1.3 Strengthening the Participation of Women from the Grassroots and from within MARD

The draft Programme for Rural Development needs to better articulate gender issues and strategies. The section on gender in the current draft is a good beginning but it lacks substance and the objectives stated are too general and immeasurable. The current objectives to “improve women's material and spiritual life”, and to "enhance women's social status and equal right" are tokenistic and carry no weight or means of achieving them.

It would be useful to include in this section an analysis of the different work conducted by rural men and women and of the difference in constraints faced by women and men. For instance, what sectors and type of work do women dominate in both agricultural production and rural industrialisation? Based on such an analysis, better policy guidelines, objectives and recommendations could be developed to target the real needs of women. Objectives could then be made more specific, for instance focusing on issues of:

- access to credit, markets, transportation and technology;
- the impact of male migration;
new emerging job opportunities for women under a market economy; and
specific training needs for women.

The CFAW at MARD should be called upon to assist in rewriting this section.

Similarly, the only other place in the document that gender is mentioned is on page 124 under the list of programmes and projects for MARD to coordinate and implement. One of these programmes is simply called "gender development". This phrase lacks meaning and does not provide direction to officials on how they would go about implementing this "programme".

6.2 Prepare a Project Document to Strengthen the Capacity for the Renewal of Rural Development to Support the Implementation of the National Programme

6.2.1 Enhancing Participation in Rural Development Component

For the follow-up project, it is recommended that a component on "enhancing participation in rural development" be included. This should be a flexible set of initiatives to enable MARD to better respond to more grassroots based activities which can be expected with the move to decentralisation and the strengthening of the rural economy.

Within the pilot areas identified under the project, experimentations in participatory approaches should be tried and tested. In terms of implementing participatory strategies, the project could start small, work intensely and remain focused. It could start in communes or districts that appear to have progressive leadership. Within these pilot districts strategies could include:

- training of district and commune officials in participatory methods and gender analysis (through in-country training, in-country study tours, and possibly some overseas study tours and fellowships);
- identification and training of community "motivators" - these should not necessarily be existing village leaders but individuals within the villages who have shown commitment to community development and have self-motivation and enthusiasm. An equal number of women and men motivators should be trained. MRDP is currently undertaking a study on how to identify female "fire-souls" - that is women who are active in their communities. This study could assist this project in developing criteria for identifying motivators;
- use of participatory methods to develop objective-oriented projects within the districts. Training in planning, project design and management should emphasise participatory techniques for problem and solution analysis. Objective-oriented project design such as the Objectives-Oriented Project Planning (ZOPP) method developed by German Technical Coopera tion (GTZ), could be adapted for local conditions.

Sufficient funds would need to be allocated to support the above process and to cover training, allowances and transport costs. One idea would be to set aside a small, flexible fund within the project to encourage the development of district and commune level initiatives. Once a group has formulated a local-level project, it could submit its proposal to this fund for consideration. Guidelines and criteria for the fund would have to be established, but the main idea would be to support well thought-out initiatives. The fund would only provide a boost to local inputs, as a certain percentage of the project funds, in-kind or in cash, would have to come from the community. This is necessary to break down the existing dependency on outside support.

A second element of the "enhancing participation in rural development" component would be to spread the word - to share information and experience throughout the country. Ways to do this include:

- developing a Community Development Source Book which documents methods, rationale and case studies from Viet Nam's experience. Many interesting initiatives are taking place, but the lessons learnt in these processes will be lost if not well documented. This book could include the experience of international donors within SIDA, OXFAM, UNDP and UNICEF projects, as well as Government led and local initiatives. The book could be similar to the UN Report, *Microfinance in Viet Nam*, in terms of having a variety of contributions and an in-depth analysis.
- In-country field visits of leaders and farmers should be facilitated to exchange these experiences. Leaders and farmers should be assisted to visit other sites within their province, or other parts of the country, to team from the experiences of others. SIDA has experimented with "lateral spread" of their PRA activities and a similar strategy could be adopted. It would also be interesting to have a cross-fertilisation of experiences between the north and south of the country.
• Study tours and fellowships to countries with vast experience in community development, such as India and the Philippines, could be made available to district and commune leaders and community "motivators" in selected pilot areas under the project. (Although given language barriers study tours rather than fellowships would be more accessible for grassroots people.) The people chosen for such training should be people who have demonstrated a commitment to rural and community development - those who are best placed to learn the most and implement change on their return. A strict set of criteria and interviews should be set up to ensure the right people (women and men) benefit from this opportunity.

• Further, a media campaign or strategy could be developed to strengthen the role of mass media (print, radio and television) in promoting farmers' self-initiatives; in providing appropriate extension information on crop and animal varieties, types of fertilisers and pesticides (and their associated risks); as well as market information and prices. (Lessons could be drawn from the UNDP assisted environment campaign.)

6.2.2 Gender Issues in the Project

Female farmers deserve to be and need to be included in any activities concerning rural development, therefore, the following recommendations are made:

• In conducting interviews and meetings all Government officials should be made aware that they need to ensure 50% of respondents are women. They should also be aware that often they may need to interview men and women separately, as women are often less likely to speak out in mixed groups.

• Within the project document it should be clearly stated that at least 30% of all project management staff and trainees be women (whether it be overseas study tours and fellowships or in-country training courses and workshops). This should not be negotiable! All to often lip service is made to women’s participation in project documents and during implementation women continue to miss out. UNDP projects have a poor track record in that on average less than 20% of trainees are women. UNDP has set a target of having 30% of women trainees by next year (1998), but at present it does not look like it will reach this figure. Excuses are given about the difficulties in finding qualified women, but 37% of university graduates in Viet Nam are women so 30% is not an unrealistic figure. If this criteria is not met, then training should be postponed until appropriate women are found.

• Such a system of gender quotas will only work if it is combined with awareness raising of project staff and district and commune leadership. To achieve this, gender training could be provided with an emphasis on women's role in agriculture and barriers to participation.

• Similarly, UNDP's National Execution (NEX) training for project staff should stress UNDP's commitment to women's participation in all levels of the project.

• A breakdown of the male and female staff within MARD at all levels should be carried out. This breakdown could form the basis of developing an affirmative action strategy to assist women in promotion to areas which are presently male dominated.

• A useful activity would be to undertake nation-wide research on gender differences in rural labour, including time use surveys to discover what is the true difference between men's and women's time use in agricultural areas. At present, much of the information is based on isolated, qualitative data and hearsay. More accurate information is needed for gender-sensitive policy development.

6.3 Prepare a Training Programme to Strengthen Rural Leadership at Commune and Village Level

6.3.1 District and Commune Level Training

Training needs have been touched on above. More specifically it is recommended that leaders and officials at the district and commune levels receive training that will help them be more in touch with the needs of their constituencies and will assist them to facilitate two-way communication. These officials should also be able to communicate local needs to the national level, and be given greater autonomy to plan and implement activities at the local level. It is proposed that a series of modules be written to promote these new skills. At this stage, three modules are suggested as follows:

Module 1: Participation and Communication

What is participation?
What are the causes of poverty?
What is community development?
Two way communication and listening skills
Group communication: Participatory group facilitation and running successful meetings
Reaching the most disadvantaged
Introduction to some participatory techniques such as semi-structured interviews, group discussions, transect walks etc.

Module 2: Project Management

Participatory Planning
Problem and Solution Analysis
Project Design
Project Management, Monitoring and Evaluation.

Module 3: Management Skills

Teamwork and Team Building
Management and Leadership Roles
Organisational Planning.

Gender awareness and analysis should be structured into each module.

At this stage, Module 1 will be developed under the current phase of the project and should be ready for field testing in February 1998. Based on lessons learnt from this module, the second and third modules should be developed under the follow-up project.

6.3.2 Central-level Training

Training at the central level within MARD is also necessary to lead to institutional strengthening to implement the Rural Development Programme and to encourage greater support to participatory approaches and gender mainstreaming. This training could include:

- in-country training and fellowships in project design and management, participatory methodologies and community development in other Asian countries such as the Philippines and India.
- in-country training in leadership and management, and strategic planning for senior leadership, provided by international management consultants who have experience in Viet Nam or other countries in transition.

7. Conclusion

In conclusion, there is a lot of potential within Viet Nam for the greater participation of rural people in the development process. The main potentials stem from having a Government that is supportive, a well-functioning network of government and mass organisations, a culture of mutual assistance and social equity, and a population that is open to new ideas. However, the major constraint is the tradition of top-down communication and planning which has led to a general dependency on the State.

Under these centrally controlled planning processes, much has been achieved in terms of economic growth, education and health care. Yet, for continued social and economic development, more space has to be created for both civil society and the private sector to participate more freely. Too great a dependency of people on the State will slow down and even cripple the objectives of rural development. Further, the vital role that women play in rural development has to be acknowledged and processes set in place to remove constraints to women's participation.

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**NOTES**

1 Many agencies use the word "control" when speaking of the goals of participation. However, when translated to Vietnamese, the meaning of "control" is slightly different. In Viet Nam it is used more to mean to monitor or
to check. Therefore, throughout the document, the word "determine" is used in preference to "control".

2 A World Bank study has found that, on average, 47% of rural households participate in the exchange of unpaid labour, but in the Central Highlands this is as high as 72% of households (World Bank, 1995:168).

3 In Vietnamese 'control' means to check or monitor, not to determine decisions and outcomes.

4 As the project consultants were outsiders coming into these villagers, the local people may have seen them as a source of funding and this would have influenced their responses, although the consultants did try to make it clear that they were conducting research only.