Chapter 7

THE POOR ORGANIZE:
THE FOUNDATION FOR SUCCESS

The Poor Organize Themselves

Civil Society Organizations Working with Poor Communities

Civil Society Organizations Influencing National Policy-Making

The foundation of poverty reduction is self-organization of the poor at the community level.

The foundation of poverty reduction is self-organization of the poor at the community level—the best antidote to powerlessness, a central source of poverty. Organized, the poor can influence local government and help hold it accountable. They can form coalitions with other social forces and build broader organizations to influence regional and national policy-making. What the poor most need, therefore, are resources to build their organizational capacity.

Civil society organizations can arise not only as local organizations whose participants are also the direct beneficiaries. They can also emerge outside local communities as third-party organizations whose beneficiaries are not members. Such third-party civil society organizations often deliver goods and services to the poor but do not directly represent them. Meanwhile, community organizations have great potential to represent the poor directly, but have difficulty wielding influence outside their localities. A third type of civil society organization might engage in policy advocacy on behalf of the poor at the national level—more so than providing benefits directly to them.

National poverty programmes work with civil society organizations for different purposes. Most common is to use them to deliver goods and services where central or local governments cannot do so effectively (box 7.1). But in many cases relying on civil society organizations for such functions is not advisable over the long term, for the capacity of government to deliver goods and services has to be built up.

Capacity-building assistance from multilateral organizations starts with the recognition that the poor are the best resource to mobilize against poverty. When national or local governments are unresponsive, people must rely on civil society organizations to advance their interests. That is the most important function of such organizations—much more so than delivering goods and services or operating as social welfare groups. So technical assistance should go to building the capacity of civil society organizations to represent the poor and to engage national policy-makers on poverty issues. The strategic goal: to forge an alliance between the state and civil society for poverty reduction.

UNDP has supported many types of civil society organizations. The South Asia Poverty Alleviation Programme started with support for community organizations. In Algeria and Mauritania UNDP has contributed to capacity building for a national or regional civil society organization to work with poor communities. And it has assisted civil society organizations such as the South African NGO Coalition in lobbying for more pro-poor national policies.

THE POOR ORGANIZE THEMSELVES

Some recent poverty programmes—such as the South Asia Poverty Alleviation Programme or the Area Development Schemes in the Arab States—are putting renewed emphasis on fostering the formation of community organizations to directly articulate people's needs and priorities. Experience attests that communities can quickly build their own organizations and select good leaders once they are afforded the opportunities.

Often these projects provide seed capital and technical assistance, but their main purpose is supporting people's own organization. Usually the first level of organization is a village or neighbourhood self-help group. These groups can eventually be combined into larger area-based institutions to wield influence with local government or the private sector.

Where the great majority of people are poor, there is little point in narrowing organizations to include only the deprived. Even when a larger share of households are not poor, many of the more successful efforts organize everyone into a common group. The challenge then is to ensure that the poorest are not marginalized within the community group. Promoting the use of participatory methods in building these organizations can help. Where some groups, such as women, might be inhibited by working in a common organization, separate organizations can be formed, as in the South Asia Poverty Alleviation Programme.

To be most effective, capacity building among community organizations should be broad-based. Projects often seek to develop community leaders who have professional skills, but focusing training on only a small stratum can detach the more skilled and literate members from the less skilled and literate. Village development groups can then become springboards for personal ambition, leaving most of the members passive and disengaged. That is why support to community organizations often needs—and why people demand—an emphasis on spreading literacy and basic skills broadly among the members.

Box 7.1 *Partnering with Civil Society Organizations to Create Jobs in Algeria*

UNDP is supporting a new initiative to help provide livelihoods for unemployed women and youth in remote areas of Algeria. With the assistance of a national volunteer association, a pilot project has been launched to support the development of livestock and other income-generating activities in arid zones and on high plateaux.

Started in 1997, this is the first project of its kind to create jobs where local authorities have only recently acknowledged the existence of poverty. The project's innovation is to use a knowledge transfer approach to link illiterate women with young female professionals, such as veterinarians and agricultural technicians, to build skills for raising animals. Families receive a small number of sheep or goats and sell the milk, wool and meat not needed for household consumption.

The project has been developed in close collaboration with Touiza, a national association of volunteers who develop networks for mutual assistance and solidarity in poor areas. Touiza uses a broad network of professionals—sociologists, economists, agronomists and microcredit specialists—in a range of community development activities. Successful in generating income for rural families, the project plans to expand to other areas of the country that have requested Touiza's assistance.

Government decentralization programmes often run aground on partial democratization at the community level. When village councils in Uganda elect an executive body, it can take over the functions of the council and leave most of the members uninvolved. In Ghana communities are supposed to formulate their own development plans, but the plans can be drafted instead by leaders or experts and presented to mass meetings for mere approval. Early in Mongolia's poverty programme local groups were supposed to use participatory methods to decide what projects to undertake, but sometimes the group leader would make the decision and grab most of the loan to the group. These are common problems—not easily resolved unless decision-making in communities becomes more democratic.

Mauritania has tried to overcome these problems by using participatory methods in designing and implementing its anti-poverty projects—and making an information, education and communication strategy an integral part of its poverty programme (see the country profile). Community members take an active interest in the success of the projects, contribute their own resources and maintain the local infrastructure that the projects build.

Communities Take the Lead
Learning participatory methods of organization can also speed community development. The Social Development Fund in the Gambia disburses grants for community-based schemes, but local organizations must be legally registered to receive financing and be willing to cover 10% of projects' costs from their own resources. These requirements have encouraged many village-level savings and credit organizations to register and to receive training to become more professional.

The Thailand–United Nations Collaborative Action Plan has encouraged local communities to design their own development projects. Many communities have mobilized considerable amounts of their own resources for the projects. More important, they have begun participating in "learning networks" among villages to exchange information and lessons on their activities.

These efforts assume (rightly) that the poor are often the best initial resource to combat poverty—and that the surest road to eventual poverty eradication is encouraging their own organization. It is no coincidence that poverty is likely to be most prevalent where people's organizations are the weakest or least numerous. Powerlessness goes hand in hand with other forms of deprivation, such as malnutrition, illiteracy and lack of a decent income.

Eventually such organizations of the poor must confront the difficulty of "leveraging up" their influence organizationally and politically. The South Asia Poverty Alleviation Programme has grappled with this problem.

The South Asia Poverty Alleviation Programme
The South Asia Poverty Alleviation Programme (SAPAP) was launched in early 1996 in Bangladesh, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka. Scheduled to last seven years, it has a budget totalling $31 million.

Its main aim is to demonstrate the effectiveness of social mobilization in combating rural poverty. The programme also seeks to enhance national capacities to integrate poverty reduction into growth strategies and to carry out participatory poverty monitoring.

What distinguishes the programme's strategy is its emphasis on fostering people's independent organizations as the primary means to advance their interests (box 7.2). Most noteworthy is its focus from the outset on the needs and priorities of poorer community members, especially poor women. Because it puts special emphasis on women's empowerment, it supports the formation of both women's and men's organizations.

The programme's early support concentrates on building the community's financial capital by encouraging regular saving—and on training villagers in vital skills. It puts a premium on training activists who can assume early leadership of their community's activities. One of its hallmarks is its consistent emphasis on participatory decision-making throughout all stages of development projects.

In later stages SAPAP projects provide seed capital to start community credit schemes and foster community links with government line departments and with financial institutions. Once villagers are well organized, they are more able to secure access to public services and formal financing. SAPAP has found that members of credit groups often prefer to provide larger loans to fund meaningful economic activities for a few poor households rather than split up the available credit into many small loans.

The programme has so far been remarkably successful in bringing rapid and sustained benefits to the rural poor. Its greatest early achievement has been strengthening community organizations. The poor will be able to continually assess their needs, maintain their development initiatives and initiate their own projects—well after the programme ends.

Building People's Organizations in India

The South Asia Poverty Alleviation Programme of India operates in three districts of Andhra Pradesh, where it has already helped set up more than 4,000 self-help groups, 94% composed entirely of women.

Villagers begin by forming small self-help groups—later brought together in coalitions to produce village

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Box 7.2 *Social Mobilization in Bangladesh*

In mid-1999 a rapid assessment of the five-year-old Bangladesh South Asia Poverty Alleviation Programme—based in Kishwarganj Thana and covering 200 villages and about 250,000 people—looked at how social mobilization had expanded the social, economic and political opportunities of the poor.

In the programme area village organizations are now forming links among themselves to start "home-grown" collective projects, ranging from community clinics to factories, learning from one another's experiences across districts. They are also forming business associations, such as in chicken farming, to increase their bargaining power with middlemen and to link more directly with markets.

The assessment argues against a strictly targeted approach to poverty reduction because many people find it socially demeaning to be called poor. Villagers think that they share many similar social characteristics. But their economic positions can fluctuate from year to year: those who are poor this year may not be next year, and vice versa. Moreover, those who are disadvantaged are not one big group—"the poor"—with uniform features: they are members of different occupational groups and classes and lack access to resources for different reasons.

What are some of the reasons for the villagers' success with SAPAP? One is the approach of mobilizing an entire community. Another is the emphasis on building organizations. Villagers have become experienced enough in self-organization to know when a group is not serving their

interests. If one village group does not work, people drop out, join another or start their own. They have also learned how to bypass the inhibiting bureaucracy of the central government. In fact, the assessment argues against replicating SAPAP as a nationwide government-led model because this might compromise its success in building grass-roots capacity.

One common misconception about SAPAP in Bangladesh is that its activities revolve around credit. But borrowers make up less than a quarter of the participants. Often what villagers say they want is not so much credit as access to information and technology—to boost their yields, grow new crops or start sideline activities, for example. Besides, villagers mobilized 45.6 million taka of their own savings through the project.

organizations. While the village organizations increase the collective strength of villagers, they do not pre-empt the independent decision-making power of the self-help groups. The village organizations, in turn, are federated into larger organizations, *mandal samakyas*, which can cover 30–40 villages. These larger organizations represent one of the project's most important achievements.

All the self-help groups are meeting their running costs from the interest on loans to members. Many of the village organizations are meeting the costs for an office, a manager and training of village technical specialists.

WHAT DISTINGUISHES THE SOUTH ASIA POVERTY ALLEVIATION PROGRAMME'S STRATEGY IS ITS EMPHASIS ON FOSTERING PEOPLE'S INDEPENDENT ORGANIZATIONS AS THE PRIMARY MEANS TO ADVANCE THEIR INTERESTS.

Some of the larger mandal samakyas have also generated enough income to pay for an office and a coordinator.

These self-managed organizations not only are becoming financially sustainable. They also are increasingly able to respond to the growing needs of the poor for access to credit, information, skills and technology. The village organizations and mandal samakyas have a special responsibility for helping to organize the unorganized poor and for ensuring that the poorest of the poor are not excluded from project activities.

People's Savings The self-help groups encourage members to save regularly, the foundation for all resource mobilization. Seed capital from the project allows villagers to start microcredit activities for income generation. Some local banks have been persuaded to begin lending to the poor, often thanks to the village organizations, which act as intermediaries to secure bulk credit. Banks could not profitably lend to the myriad of self-help groups. In addition, some of the mandal samakyas have set up their own non-bank financial institutions, which hold great promise for enhancing the poor's access to credit. Already villagers are less dependent on local moneylenders and landlords for small loans.

A focus of the project: increase the poor's access to knowledge, skills and technology. Many villagers have already been trained in simple bookkeeping and management of organizations. With seed capital from the project,

village organizations have built a cadre of village-level technical specialists in primary health care, sanitation, livestock management and agriculture. These specialists are accountable to the poor, in part because the poor pay them.

The mandal samakyas, useful in establishing links with government programmes, lobby for the rights and entitlements of the poor. They regularly invite government officials to their monthly meetings to learn more about programmes, air grievances and press for benefits and services. Through these efforts, villagers now have markedly better access to such public services as education, health care and veterinary services.

Women's Empowerment Through their involvement in projects, both women and young girls have benefited by gaining new self-confidence and becoming much more active in community affairs. And through credit and technical assistance, women have been able to contribute much more to household income and improve the well-being of their families—boosting their respect in and outside their households.

Women now call on strong networks of other activist women to make difficult decisions that their husbands might oppose, such as insisting on sending children to school rather than to work. Some villages have even developed systems to discourage men from dominating decision-making. In one, women are fined if their husbands try to attend a self-help group's meeting. And by rotating leadership responsibilities among themselves, women are gaining experience in involving the community in local development initiatives.

Once organized, women also take on social causes, such as reducing child labour, preventing child marriages, establishing early education centres and boosting their children's enrolment in primary school. They have encouraged village organizations to focus on providing resources to the most vulnerable community members—widowed or deserted women.

More keenly aware of their rights, women now petition local authorities for better access to health and education services. And more aware that village livelihoods are linked to environmental conditions, they have become the principal advocates for protecting natural resources. In one case women "captured" and then fined men who had cut down custard trees, one of the women's main sources of income.

Box 7.3 *Strengthening Civil Society through Traditional Organizations in Bulgaria*

The *chitalishtes* are one of the oldest forms of civic organization in Bulgaria. Dating to the mid-19th century and found in virtually every township, they have served as community centres in a wide range of social and civic activities.

Through the project Community Participation and Development in Bulgaria, UNDP is helping to transform chitalishtes into a network of broad-based civic organizations to reduce poverty and improve their members' quality of life. Twenty chitalishtes in townships have expanded into providing vocational training, fostering new businesses, resolving conflicts and protecting the environment. These organizations are also building the capacity to manage themselves as self-supporting institutions.

The chitalishte in Elhovo focuses on generating sustainable employment for disadvantaged people by providing training in harvesting and marketing medicinal herbs. For a sizeable share of the participants—many of them members of the Roma minority—medicinal herbs provide their only source of income. The chitalishte in Topolovgrad helped create a public ecological council that has initiated small-scale environmental projects, such as reforestation and public education campaigns. As an intermediary between citizens and the local government, it has also established a "green" telephone line for citizens to voice environmental concerns and suggestions.

Chitalishtes do face problems, however. At first staff members had no mechanism for understanding the broad needs in their communities, and they had little experience or training in managing projects and generating income.

Despite such problems, the chitalishtes are a natural vehicle for empowering people and increasing their role in local decision-making. Forming new partnerships with governments, civil society organizations and donors, they have mobilized hundreds of volunteers to work on community improvement projects. Seven new civil society organizations have emerged from chitalishte activity in target areas. Encouraged by the success of the first phase of activities, 25 new chitalishtes from larger regional centres have joined the project.

Relying on Traditional Organizations

In some countries governments are still uncomfortable about supporting independent-minded civil society organizations and involving them and community members in directing anti-poverty projects. They may rely on traditional organizations—rather than creating new ones—to carry out poverty reduction activities. In Uzbekistan the *mahallas*, officially sanctioned neighbourhood organizations, have the responsibility for targeting social assistance. They have also taken on new functions, mobilizing entire communities for common development projects and engaging members in public affairs.

The *chitalishtes* in Bulgaria, which UNDP supports to increase their development orientation, are another example of traditional organizations being reformed to serve new, more poverty-focused purposes (box 7.3). Such groups have deep roots in communities and can often more readily mobilize people's participation than newly created organizations.

Many poverty programmes try to start new village groups geared to the objectives of donor-financed projects. More often than not such groups eventually wither because they have not risen naturally from the needs of the community.

Traditional organizations do have weaknesses. They are seldom designed to help lift communities out of poverty or to mobilize members to confront local government with demands for change. Often they are dominated by local elites and do not lend themselves easily to democratic decision-making. In addition, deep-seated divisions—based on caste, class or gender—can keep community members disunited.

Such traditional institutions are often slow to adapt to the demands of a modernizing economy. Often the web of local traditional organizations can be so dense and intrusive that it suffocates individual initiative. Density is not always a mark of development potential.

CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS WORKING WITH POOR COMMUNITIES

National poverty programmes have often used civil society organizations to implement small projects in poor communities. UNDP has worked with civil society organizations extensively in such activities, but it has been shifting from supporting income generation to building the capacity of these organizations to deliver sustainable benefits to the poor and represent their interests.

The Partners in Development Programme

The Partners in Development Programme reflects UNDP's commitment to strengthening its collaboration with civil society organizations. The programme targets poverty reduction through small grants to civil society and community-based organizations to fund income generation, capacity-building and networking initiatives. With 10 years of fieldwork to draw on, the programme offers rich experience with small-grant programmes and collaboration with civil society organizations.

The programme started in 1988 by providing small grants in 64 countries, primarily for income-generating activities. A midterm evaluation concluded that the potential impact and sustainability of community-based microprojects are determined largely by the institutional and technical capabilities of the implementing civil society organizations. So in its second phase the programme shifted its focus to capacity building and networking among civil society organizations—and gave larger amounts of financing to fewer target countries.

A 1996 UNDP evaluation of anti-poverty projects praised the programme for its unusual ability to deliver direct support to poor communities and to civil society organizations, especially those operating in adverse environments. Its design also gave it great potential to reach vulnerable groups, partly by working through national selection committees in each participating country. The committees established priorities and determined the criteria for grants in response to local needs.

Some Weaknesses of Microprojects This potential for grass-roots impact has not always been realized, however. The microprojects have been criticized for being sporadic, dispersed, of short duration and without a common sectoral or geographic focus—all of which have reduced, it is claimed, the programme's potential to promote sustained development efforts. In addition, its "minimalist" approach to monitoring and evaluation did not encourage the drawing of useful lessons from experience.

Despite these weaknesses, some projects have leveraged limited funds for substantial development impacts. In Nepal original grants to civil society organizations for support to animal husbandry, agro-forestry, community development and income generation were small—but the beneficiary communities contributed nearly half the total project resources in kind, cash or labour.

The programme has also demonstrated that civil society organizations can fill important gaps in the delivery of essential goods and services in poor areas. In a project in the Lao People's Democratic Republic—the Highland Integrated Rural Development Pilot Project—civil society organizations facilitated community participation to build water systems in a remote area not served by the government. The process brought diverse ethnic groups into a common local development effort.

Strengths in Building the Capacity of Civil Society Organizations The real strength of the programme lies, however, in building the capacity of civil society organizations and in offering flexible support to local organizations working in poor communities. The programme has served as an incubator for new organizations, supporting advocacy on politically sensitive issues and bringing local communities into national-level policy dialogues. In several cases projects have called the attention of national decision-makers to human rights abuses, employment discrimination, land tenure conflicts and the needs of indigenous groups.

Some civil society organizations protect the rights of such excluded or isolated groups as indigenous peoples or groups facing particular forms of discrimination, such as women or racial minorities. Civil society organizations do this because the state is failing in its basic responsibility. It might even be that they have to protect the poor against state abuse—or against private sector abuse that the state allows to occur.

The Need to Replicate Projects

UNDP is involved with a number of small-grant programmes that rely on civil society organizations for implementation. Many of these small-scale projects have had notable successes. But is UNDP dispersing its resources too broadly among too many small-scale activities? The usual justification is that these are pilot projects that, if successful, could be replicated by governments and by other donors. But the means to replicate these projects are not always built into their design.

- If projects are to be replicated, they need a serviceable system of monitoring and evaluation, but few projects have such a system.
- Mechanisms for learning and communicating lessons need to be an integral part of projects, but rarely are.
- Encouraging participation and empowerment can be expensive, and expensive projects are difficult to replicate. Yet little thought is devoted to reducing costs in order to aid broad replication of successful projects.

Box 7.4 Making War on Poverty in South Africa

In 1998 a unique series of public meetings enabled poor people throughout South Africa to talk to decision-makers about their hardships. These meetings were the first stage of the strategy of the War on Poverty Forum, a partnership of civil society organizations, the government and such donor organizations as UNDP.

The South African NGO Coalition organized 35 day-long "Speak out on Poverty" hearings in 29 locations. More than 10,000 came to the first set of hearings alone. Poor people, most of whom had had little or no contact with government representatives, spoke about their experiences and their ideas for improving their lives—at the speak-out meetings and through toll-free telephones and the mail.

The demands of poor South Africans were modest: they wanted to be able to send their children to school, get water without having to walk miles and possess a small piece of land with some tenure security. It became clear that women and rural residents suffered the severest poverty.

Those who spoke out were referred to a local civil society organization or government department for help on specific problems. More general problems were used to help craft recommendations for general policy changes, released as a report that constituted a national plan for poverty reduction.

Through this participatory partnership, the forum put local experiences of poverty on the national agenda. Plans to replicate the "speak out" model, tremendously effective and requiring little money, are under way elsewhere in Sub-Saharan Africa. The challenge now is finding ways to translate the forum's recommendations into action.

Empowering the poor, the first step in eradicating poverty, involves a fundamental reorientation of donor activities—a greater and more sustained reliance on participatory methods. The poor have to be allowed to take the lead. Their communities often need an injection of resources. But what the poor most need is greater organizational capacity, more power to influence the direction of their lives.

External assistance needs to be focused on helping build up this capacity rather than on merely delivering more goods and services—ultimately the function of government. Building this capacity for empowerment will take some time. People do not become empowered overnight, but when given a genuine chance to build organizations that can improve their conditions, they seize it.

CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS INFLUENCING NATIONAL POLICY-MAKING

In addition to building up the capacity of civil society organizations at the local level, UNDP has supported initiatives for such organizations to have an impact on national policy-making, as with South Africa's War on Poverty Forum (box 7.4). The forum mobilized poor people to speak out on their conditions and impress upon policy-makers the importance of understanding the "lived experience" of poverty. The Poverty Reduction Forum in Zimbabwe has had similar success, encouraging civil society organizations and community-based groups

to voice their opinions on how the national budget could be structured to have an impact on poverty (see the country profile).

The objective of these national initiatives is to find ways to bring poor communities into a policy dialogue with governments and to shift the balance of political influence in their favour. It is critical for people living in poverty to have a "national voice" as well as a "local voice" in determining public policies. The South Asia Poverty Alleviation Programme is seeking more systematically to exert a national impact on government policy-making. In Nepal, for example, it has been able to encourage replication of its social mobilization model by working with the country's national governance programme.

Civil society organizations, often ignored in national policy-making, can be strong advocates for the interests of the poor. It is in the best interest of the poor to have civil society organizations and the government forge a strategic alliance for poverty reduction.

The two need not compete. Civil society organizations can represent people's interests to the government but cannot take over many of the government's functions. A more viable solution is for civil society organizations to help governments become more democratic and accountable—to discharge their responsibilities for delivering public services and providing social justice and protection.

An issue in India is the need to reconcile the emphasis on building up civil society organizations with the democratic reforms in Panchayat Raj institutions, the organs of

Box 7.5 *Promoting Public-Private Partnerships in Trinidad and Tobago*

To advance poverty reduction efforts in Trinidad and Tobago, UNDP has worked closely with the government's Change Management Unit for Poverty Eradication and Equity Building, which is part of the Ministry of Social and Community Development.

The unit includes the Secretariat of the Ministerial Council on Social Development, with representatives from 14 government ministries and from the Tobago House of Assembly, which spearheads the implementation of the government's commitments at the United Nations–sponsored world summits. It also has a

Civic Council on Social Equity, an umbrella group of 19 civic organizations to involve representatives of poor communities in a national policy dialogue.

One of the unit's more promising initiatives is Adopt a Community Programme, which fosters collaboration between the private sector and local communities. In 20 communities, selected through a 1996 survey on the determinants of living conditions, corporations assist the local government for 30 months with projects in education,

training, infrastructure, sports and culture. Several companies, including local banks and multinational enterprises, have volunteered to participate in the programme. UNDP has been providing technical assistance to enable the unit to monitor the projects.

local government strengthened by constitutional reforms in the early 1990s. If Panchayat Raj institutions offer marginal groups a genuine opportunity to participate in direct democracy at the local level, what is the function of community-based people's organizations?

Normally people join political parties to influence local or national government. Is it possible for such people's organizations to remain non-political? What is their purpose if local government becomes more democratic and accountable and political parties exist to champion the interests of the poor?

Answering such pointed questions helps clarify the positive role, and inherent limits, of civil society organizations. As the work of the United Nations Capital Development Fund illustrates (see chapter 6), the objective should be to cement an alliance between the state and civil society—between local, regional and national government on the one side, and civil society organizations and community-based groups on the other. People often turn to civil society organizations or form their own groups when government is unresponsive to their needs. But for many functions civil society organizations should not displace the government.

UNDP is often seen as an "honest broker" between civil society and government where a strategic alliance between the two has broken down—often the case in post-conflict situations such as in Guatemala and Mali. UNDP supports projects to build the capacity of civil

society organizations to function effectively, and it helps set up training for central government officials in how to collaborate with such organizations. In many countries where civil society organizations are uncommon or have been weakened, it is necessary to work at the national level to create an enabling environment that will allow them to flourish.

An example of such efforts is UNDP's support to the Popular Participation Law enacted in Bolivia in 1994. The law gave civil society organizations and community groups such rights as supervising the delivery of public services, representing communities before municipal governments and proposing the appointment or removal from office of local education and health authorities. UNDP recognized that in many urban and rural areas implementing the law would require capacity building, institutional strengthening and technical advice rather than direct support. Thus it emphasized, for example, training hundreds of community leaders to provide better local representation.

A growing area of UNDP's work is building alliances between the government and the private sector to promote development. In Trinidad and Tobago a key aspect of UNDP's support to the national anti-poverty strategy has been to foster the contributions of private corporations to community development in poor areas (box 7.5).