

**The Sustainable Agricultural Rural Development (SARD) Initiative**  
**Report on the period 2002-2008<sup>1</sup>**  
**to the Commission on Sustainable Development's 16<sup>th</sup> Session**  
**May 2008**

**Introduction**

**SARD**

Twenty years ago, the Brundtland Commission's "*Our Common Future*" defined the concept of sustainable development as "*development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs*". Indeed, the recognition the Brundtland report gave to the concept of intra- and intergenerational equity and the inextricable links between sustainable economic and social development, human well-being and the environment is as relevant today as it was then.

Despite this, mobilising political will, financial resources, appropriate institutional structures and international, national and local capacities to stem and curtail increasing environmental degradation including climate change, remains a challenge. The SARD concept requires development practitioners to analyse agricultural policy through a multi-disciplinary, multidimensional and multi-cultural lens in order to help rural people satisfy their socio-economic and cultural aspirations, and protect and conserve the natural resource base to meet future needs. SARD holds an important place within the FAO's Strategic Framework (2000-2015) and the UN System's commitments to the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Indeed, in two of the Organization's three global goals, SARD and sustainable utilization of natural resources are specifically mentioned.<sup>2</sup>

**The SARD Initiative**

The SARD Initiative emerged from the Dialogue on Land and Agriculture at CSD-8 in 2000 and the subsequent SARD Forum that was organized as a side event at FAO's Committee on Agriculture in 2001. It was launched at the World Summit for Sustainable Development (WSSD) in Johannesburg in August 2002 by more than 80 stakeholders. In the run up to WSSD, a growing international consensus considered multi-stakeholder partnership initiatives encompassing wide civil society participation as key to implementing Agenda 21. The SARD Initiative is one of many partnerships that grew out of that consensus.<sup>3</sup> It is a multi-stakeholder umbrella framework facilitated by FAO and defines itself as a "*voluntary process*

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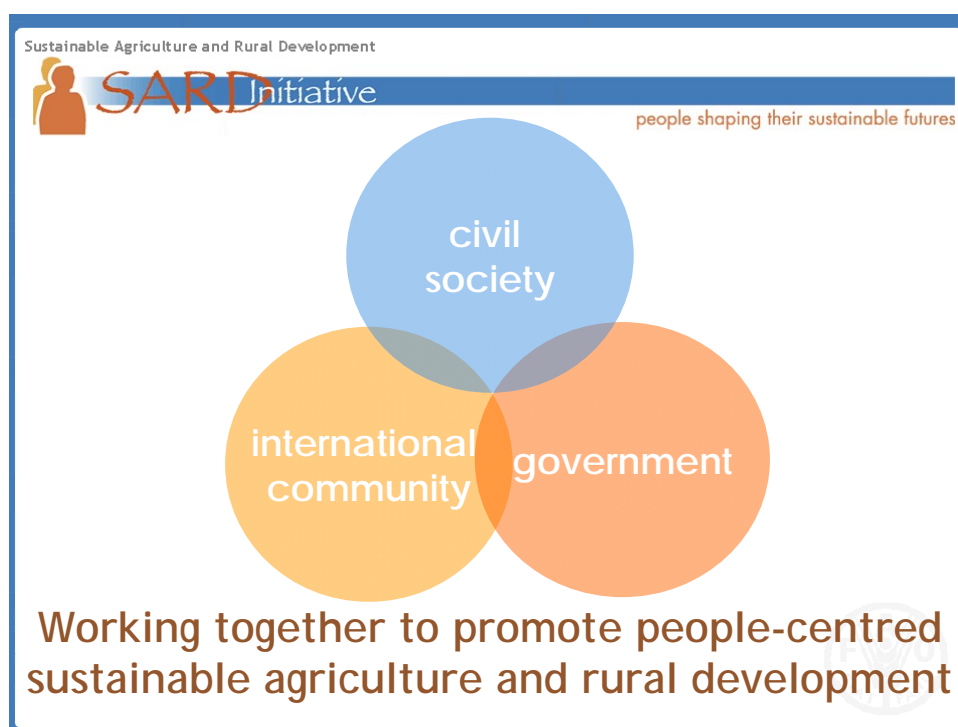
<sup>1</sup> We are grateful to Clare Sycamore for her assistance in researching and preparing the first draft of this document, to Major Group focal points for responding to the questionnaire and consultation on which parts of this report are based, and to Paola Termine and Adjmal Dulloo for providing inputs to subsequent drafts. FAO is also grateful to the Governments of Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Norway, and Switzerland for their financial and/or political support to various portions of the SARD work, and particularly to Canada, Italy, and Norway for their financial or in-kind support to the SARD Initiative.

<sup>2</sup> Goal 1: Access of all people at all times to sufficient nutritionally adequate and safe food, ensuring that the number of undernourished people is reduced by half by no later than 2015. Goal 2: The continued contribution of sustainable agriculture and rural development, including fisheries and forestry, to economic and social progress and the well-being of all. Goal 3: The conservation, improvement and sustainable utilization of natural resources, including land, water, forest, fisheries and genetic resources for food and agriculture.

<sup>3</sup> Over 45 agricultural and 27 rural development partnerships were launched at WSSD. At that event, FAO launched the SARD Initiative, Education for Rural People and the International Partnership for Sustainable Development in Mountain Regions. Subsequently, FAO also registered the Globally Important Ingenious Agricultural Heritage Systems and the Nutrition and Sustainable Development partnership initiatives.

*of action-oriented commitments, focusing on three thematic areas deemed essential to accelerate SARD and make more rapid progress towards MDG1 and MDG 7’.*

Due to time constraints and to the nature of the SARD Initiative itself, as a coalition of like minded stakeholders operating on separate paths but towards a common goal, this report cannot provide a comprehensive analysis of all of the Initiative’s outputs. The report focuses on a few of the achievements, about which the SARD Initiative facilitator at FAO<sup>4</sup> is knowledgeable and which would not have taken place if the SARD Initiative had not existed. This document should be considered and read, in close conjunction with the highly insightful and valuable report prepared by Major Groups as a UNDESA background paper for the 16<sup>th</sup> session of the CSD entitled: “The Practice to Policy Continuum in Sustainable Agriculture and Rural Development (SARD): A Civil Society Reflection on the Importance of Collaborations of Major Groups and Governments to Advance SARD\*” (Background Paper No. 5, DESA/DSD/2008/5) which is available here ([http://www.un.org/esa/sustdev/csd/csd16/documents/bp5\\_2008.pdf](http://www.un.org/esa/sustdev/csd/csd16/documents/bp5_2008.pdf)). The present document outlines, from an FAO perspective, major achievements and lessons about constraints and opportunities for the SARD Initiative.



## **A. Major Achievements of the SARD Initiative**

As the first global programme emerging from international dialogues on SARD designed to be led by Civil Society, supported by Governments and facilitated by Intergovernmental Agencies, the SARD Initiative’s very existence can be considered as a major achievement. It works in a unique way at global and country level, with governments and with civil society, and with both good practice and good policy.

<sup>4</sup> The FAO SARD Initiative Facilitator from its launch in August 2002 to January 2007 was Eve Crowley, who provided the information for this report and has continued to disseminate outputs, until a subsequent facilitator can be nominated.

## 1. The relevance of a multi-stakeholder partnership to achieve SARD

No individual group or organization can hope to achieve SARD alone. A high level of international consensus surrounds the idea that the existence of multi-stakeholder partnerships is highly relevant, if not quintessential to addressing the challenges involved in stemming and curtailing unsustainable agricultural and rural development practices. This is also recognised by FAO in numerous communications and strategy documents. For example the *Strategic Framework for FAO 2000-2015* states that: “FAO needs to build constructive and effective relations with non-state partners, based on its own and their comparative advantages. This will also permit a more effective focus on cross-cutting socio-economic issues, including population and gender concerns.”

The Initiative helps to achieve SARD by promoting good practices for SARD, improving access to resources, and fostering fairer conditions of employment in agriculture and rural areas. The SARD Initiative has proved itself to be a relevant multi-stakeholder partnership to work towards achieving SARD. In particular it has succeeded in:

- strengthening the visibility of SARD as a key development goal;
- building stronger relationships among the nine Major Groups, governments, and a range of individual organizations representing interests as diverse as Indigenous Peoples, Farmers’ Organizations and Business and Industry. This represents the beginning of a long term process and investment in working together to find common strategies to address common problems;
- encouraging these different groups to share knowledge and experience in a more formalised and structured way (most Major Groups are now working together to prepare for CSD where SARD parallel sessions will be held);
- supporting some pilot efforts and building the capacity of rural communities, disadvantaged groups and other stakeholders to improve access to resources and good practices in 10 countries and supporting good practice identification in these and in an additional 25 countries (see map below).
- strengthening inter-agency and intra FAO cooperation on SARD. The establishment of FAO’s first Website on SARD (<http://www.fao.org/sard/en/sard/1888/index.html>) and the recent publication of the SARD Policy Brief series (<http://www.fao.org/sard/en/init/2980/2378/index.html>) have been the result of FAO and Major Group cooperation with a number of other FAO Divisions and UN agencies including ILO, IFAD, UNDESA, UNFPA and are clear catalytic impacts of the SARD Initiative.
- Providing a platform for Major Group cooperation with FAO on SARD issues.
- Supporting implementation of FAO’s Strategic Framework 2000-2015 in so far as Partnerships and Alliances are concerned. This was even recognized by FAO’s member governments in the 19<sup>th</sup> Session of the Committee on Agriculture, which “*agreed that the SARD Initiative is an important instrument for fulfilling FAO’s responsibility as UN System Task Manager for WSSD follow-up on implementation of Chapter 14, Agenda 21. It welcomed FAO’s continued support for the SARD Initiative...and appreciated the high degree of stakeholder participation. A number of delegates expressed the hope that the scope of the SARD Initiative would be enlarged in due course*” (para. 21) ([http://www.fao.org/docrep/meeting/009/j5312e.htm#P153\\_23843](http://www.fao.org/docrep/meeting/009/j5312e.htm#P153_23843))

- Recruiting and building the capacities of a cadre of 22 highly qualified and capable volunteers of 17 different nationalities to support the SARD Initiative (see <http://www.fao.org/sard/en/init/partic/1343/index.html>).

## 2. SARD Initiative Theme I: Securing access to resources for the rural poor

Secure access to land and other natural resources (forests, water, fisheries, pastures, etc.) is a crucial factor in the eradication of food insecurity and rural poverty.

### a. Supporting international and regional process to improve access to resources by the poor and vulnerable



Major achievements of the SARD Initiative in helping the rural poor to secure access to these resources included:

- Support to the **International Conference on Agrarian Reform and Rural Development** (ICARRD) (Porto Alegre, 2006), organized jointly by FAO and the Government of Brazil (2006), in which some 1400 people, including government delegations from 92 Member States and more than 150 farmer and civil society organizations participated and 40 national reports, 29 case studies, 5 issues papers, and 15 partnerships were presented. The Conference Final Declaration<sup>5</sup>, agreed by 92 governments, presents a vision and principles for agrarian reform and rural development and emphasizes the need for inclusive dialogue, coherent, ethical, participatory and integrated policies and programmes based on decentralization and empowerment at local level, capacity building, technical assistance, applied research, technology development and transfer, practical, simple, affordable and accessible administrative mechanisms to secure land rights, a strengthened role of the State to develop and implement more just and people-centred development policies and programmes, support for local knowledge and experiences, and increased local, national, regional and global partnerships. Governments committed themselves to institutionalize social dialogue, cooperation and monitoring and evaluation of

<sup>5</sup> FAO 2006 *Final Report of ICARRD*, [http://www.icarrd.org/en/news\\_down/ICARRD\\_final\\_report\\_En.doc](http://www.icarrd.org/en/news_down/ICARRD_final_report_En.doc)

progress in agrarian reform and rural development through a lasting platform at global, regional, national and local levels in order to promote social justice and environmentally sustainable agrarian reform and rural development, more focused on the poor and respectful of gender equality. In addition to supporting the identification of good practices for this conference, facilitating participation by Major Group representatives, and working to strengthen attention to workers, indigenous peoples, women, and a number of other Major Group concerns related to agrarian reform and rural development, the SARD Initiative organized an official side-event (9/3/06) on “From ICARRD to CSD: Lessons in Sustainable Agriculture and Rural Development”, co-hosted by the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN-DESA) and a session on “the SARD Initiative: a partnership for action” was organized (8/3/06) to raise awareness and promote partnership with the SARD Initiative.

- The SARD Initiative also worked to strengthen attention to women’s, pastoralists’, and Indigenous Peoples’ issues by the **High Level Commission for Legal Empowerment of the Poor**, by helping to strengthen the capacity of rural communities to access and manage natural resources in Africa. A regional workshop was held on **Improving Tenure Security of the Rural Poor for Sub-Saharan Africa**, (Nakuru, Kenya, 22-16/10/06) and brought together 60 experts in land, pastoral, forest and fisheries property rights from African countries and International Organizations to review current evidence and recent findings about best options for legally empowering the poor through improved property right regimes in Africa. As part of the agenda, the SARD Initiative supported a one day policy maker exposure field visit, the Naivasha Learning Exchange on Pro-poor Property Rights, around Lake Naivasha to enable poor representatives of rural communities to communicate their resource access concerns directly with policy makers and to raise awareness about the good practices and options available to them. As a result of this experience, a Kenyan NGO, Reconcile, together with other stakeholders established a neutral Stakeholders’ Forum and organized a consultation to discuss and draft a management plan to advise the Lake Naivasha Planning Committee in Kenya.
- Key findings and good practices from these experiences were developed as policy issues and options to build Government capacities in the form of a *SARD and Rural Property Rights* policy brief. (<ftp://ftp.fao.org/SD/SDA/SDAR/sard/SARD-rural-property-rights%20-%20english.pdf> )

The following nine good practices related to **access to resources** were identified and documented (<http://www.fao.org/sard/en/init/1574/2225/1846/index.html> ):

- Efficient water utilization through gravity irrigation, Kianguni, Kenya
- Small holder common bean (*Phaseolus vulgaris*) seed production, Malawi
- Forest plantation development system for equitable benefit-sharing, Ghana
- (Mapping and documentation exercise on property grabbing among orphans and vulnerable children, Zambia (Legal empowerment of the poor) )
- (Capacity building of local community members in claiming land title deeds, Nyando basin, Kenya (Legal empowerment of the poor) )
- Rescuing of the food and agricultural production of the native potato in the State of Merida, Northern Andes, Venezuela
- Community Based Forest Management in Northern Mindanao, Philippines
- Community gene banks in Andhra Pradesh, India

- Third Party Arbitration Courts to settle land, property and commercial disputes, Tajikistan (Legal empowerment of the poor)

Beyond these, one additional good practice on legal empowerment processes in Namibia and three good practices on land and legal empowerment, property grabbing, indigenous peoples and natural resources access in Zambia and Kenya were identified and will soon be available on the SARD Initiative Good Practice Database.

In addition, the following nine good practices for improving **access to rural services** were identified and documented (<http://www.fao.org/sard/en/init/1574/2225/1846/index.html>):

- Farmer life schools for promotion of food security and well being of HIV/AIDS affected household, South Africa
- (Box gardens for vulnerable households, Kitwe, Zambia)
- Milk chilling and marketing for improved incomes, Siongiroi Division, Kenya
- Grow boxes for food security in Trinidad and Tobago
- Participatory Guarantee Systems for marketing organic products, Brazil
- Primary health care programme: training of volunteer health workers in first aid practices in Northern Mindanao, Philippines
- Village Extension Workers Project, Papua New Guinea
- Alternate extension system, Uttar Pradesh, India
- Organic Bazaars and Rural Livelihood in Andhra Pradesh, Gujarat, Karnataka, India

#### **b. Supporting the efforts of vulnerable groups to secure access to resources for SARD**

The SARD Initiative helped to raise awareness about the resource access concerns of a number of specific vulnerable groups. To improve understanding of the resource access issues facing pastoralist communities, partnerships to manage lake resources, and the linkages between access to land and poverty in Kenya, two issues papers and reports were published:

- *Property Rights and Rural Development in the Nyando River Basin of Western Kenya*, identifying the challenges confronted by **smallholder irrigation water users** and smallholder beneficiaries of a resettlement scheme;
- *“We Are the Land, and the Land Is Us”: The Complexities of Land Tenure and Struggles for Pastoralist Livelihoods in Kenya*, including case studies from Maasai and other **pastoralists communities**;

A concerted effort was also made to support **Indigenous Peoples’** efforts to explain the meaning that land and natural resource access has for their survival and for maintenance of cultural and biological diversity over space and time. To promote greater global understanding of the importance of culture for Indigenous Peoples’ food and agro ecological systems, the SARD Initiative supported an Indigenous Peoples’ survey of cultural indicators (2002) and then (with financial assistance from the Governments of Italy and Norway) the preparation and peer review of a paper entitled *“Cultural indicators of Indigenous Peoples’ food and agro-ecological systems”* (2006, final version to be uploaded shortly). The paper was the focus of the ‘2nd Global Consultation on the Right to Food and Food Sovereignty for Indigenous Peoples’ (organized by the SARD Focal Point of the Indigenous Peoples’ Major Group, the IITC, with funding from the Christensen Fund, in Puerto Cabezas, Nicaragua, 7-9/9/06), of a Session on Indicators of the Inter-Agency Support Group for Indigenous Peoples (15-18/9/06), and a Side Event of the UN Permanent Forum for Indigenous Issues (New York, 4/2008). The paper represents a landmark in the development of agricultural, rural, and food security relevant indicators through collaborative efforts with Indigenous Peoples’ organizations.

A *SARD and Indigenous Peoples* policy brief<sup>6</sup> was also prepared and distributed to all Governments and is available in English, French, Spanish and Arabic (<ftp://ftp.fao.org/SD/SDA/SDAR/sard/SARD-indigenous-people%20-%20english.pdf>).

### **3. SARD Initiative Theme II: Fostering fairer conditions of employment in agriculture and rural areas**

#### **a. Helping to shift the global agenda and institutional priorities**

Agriculture is widely recognised as one of the most hazardous sectors in which to work. The SARD Initiative has succeeded in raising the profile of rural employment issues as a key avenue towards SARD. “...Prior to the SARD Initiative, there was less consideration of issues of employment, conditions of agricultural labour in FAO programmes and projects”<sup>7</sup> Evidence of the stronger profile of rural employment issues includes the following:

1. FAO, ILO, and IUF agreement to prepare and jointly publish a paper on *Agricultural Workers and their Contribution to Sustainable Agriculture and Rural Development (SARD)*. (<http://www.fao.org/docrep/008/af164e/af164e00.htm> )
2. Strengthened FAO dialogue and cooperation with the ILO on issues of rural employment, through a new Memorandum of Understanding signed in 2004. This document has helped to orient a more comprehensive and coherent joint approach to emerging challenges, greater policy coherence at the global, regional and country levels, strengthened synergies at country level in support of national development plans and programmes, and more coherent and comprehensive normative instruments and technical assistance by the two organizations.
3. Support through a SARD Initiative project post for FAO’s first focal point for rural employment, which resulted in improved coordination within FAO on agricultural labour and employment issues by virtue, inter alia, of an FAO informal cross departmental working group on rural employment and labour.
4. Publication of FAO’s first web page on fair conditions of employment on the SARD Initiative site (see: <http://www.fao.org/sard/en/init/964/1602/1573/index.html> )
5. FAO and IFAD joining forces with ILO to combat child labour in agriculture, through a series of SARD Initiative supported meetings to promote policy coherence, interagency training, a collaborative toolkit *Tackling hazardous child labour in agriculture: Guidance on policy and practice* (2006) (<http://www.ilo.org/ipeinfo/product/viewProduct.do?productId=2799>), FAO’s celebration for the first time of the World Day Against Child Labour (2007), and participation in a partnership among agencies and institutions active in the agricultural sector (including ILO, FAO, IFAD, IFPRI, IFAP AND IUF) to combat child labour in agriculture (<http://www.ifpri.org/media/childlabourdecl.pdf>).
6. Government discussions of rural employment concerns during the International Conference on Agrarian Reform and Rural Development (ICARRD), as stated in the conference’s final report, under *Report of Commission II: Rural Development and Poverty Eradication: Challenges and Opportunities*

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<sup>6</sup>This brief was prepared in collaboration with IITC, IFAD, and Bioversity International, with funding from the Christensen Fund and the Governments of Norway and Italy.

<sup>7</sup>Sycamore, Clare 2008 “Sustainable Agricultural Rural Development (SARD) Initiative 2002-2007 Report: a draft independent evaluation prepared in consultation with stakeholders”. FAO, internal document.

[http://www.icarrd.org/news\\_down/ICARRD\\_final\\_report\\_En.doc](http://www.icarrd.org/news_down/ICARRD_final_report_En.doc)), and the preparation of a Conference input paper on *Agricultural Labour as Stakeholders in Land Reform: A Review* ([http://www.icarrd.org/en/icard\\_doc\\_down/TD3.doc](http://www.icarrd.org/en/icard_doc_down/TD3.doc)).

7. The creation of a new FAO division in January 2007 with the explicit function to address rural employment issues: the Gender, Equity and Rural Employment Division (ESWD).
8. SARD Initiative publication of five SARD policy briefs on rural employment related issues (Agricultural workers, Child labour, Rural enterprises, Good Agricultural Practices – focusing on occupational safety and health, and Migration), plus an additional three policy briefs in collaboration with ILO which make some explicit reference to rural employment concerns within the context of other SARD themes (e.g. women, Indigenous Peoples, farmers' organizations) (<http://www.fao.org/sard/en/init/2980/2378/index.html>), all available in English, French, Spanish and Arabic.
9. Initiation, with the support of a SARD Initiative project post, of FAO's first Self assessment on Rural Employment and Decent Work, using the UN Chief Executive Board (CEB) endorsed *Toolkit for mainstreaming employment and decent work* (<http://www.oit.org/public/english/bureau/dgo/selecdoc/2007/toolkit.pdf>).
10. Greater awareness of labour and decent work in rural employment within FAO and with FAO partners through meetings, events and publications. Greater collaboration and coordination between FAO, ILO and IUF. More coherent and greater global attention to and awareness of agricultural worker issues and rights through technical reports at ICARRD, ECOSOC and other international fora.

## **b. Supporting national efforts to foster fairer conditions of employment**

The SARD Initiative was also catalytic in supporting national efforts to promote decent work in agriculture, mostly through the **Good Agricultural Practices (GAP)** framework **in Kenya and Burkina Faso**. With support from the Government of Norway and FAO's regular programme, the Initiative supported the investigation of linkages between codes and standards for food safety and quality and improved conditions of employment (social standards) and the identification of SARD good practices for better occupational health and safety (conditions of employment and sustainable natural resources management) that are consistent with GAP principles. In addition, an assessment of the impacts of implementing Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) for SARD and health and safety of workers and farm labourers was undertaken. Key impacts and results included the following:

- A study entitled *Bridging the Gap: SARD Good Practices in the Horticulture and Livestock Sectors in Kenya*, which fills gaps in information about the linkages between good agricultural practices and occupational safety and health and identifies directions for action for FAO and partner agencies.
- An *Occupational Safety and Health Module for Farmer Field Schools Training in Burkina Faso* which provides a model of how to incorporate occupational safety and health issues in Farmers Field Schools' extension training.
- A *Report on Good Agricultural Practices in Burkina Faso* prepared as the background document for the National Workshop on Good Agricultural Practices in Ouagadougou, to orient planning by a new Division of the Ministry of Agriculture responsible for good practices.



As a result of this work on occupational safety and health and conditions of employment, FAO and partners agencies are devoting greater attention to addressing workers' welfare in GAP and agricultural training and collaboration with ILO and IUF has been strengthened. Workers' union representatives participated as stakeholders in workshops and project meetings. FAO was also invited to advise the Better Cotton Initiative on principles and good practices related to agricultural workers' issues.

Finally, the following three good practices for fairer conditions of employment were identified and documented (see <http://www.fao.org/sard/en/init/1574/2225/1846/index.html>):

- Agricultural Workers and Integrated Production and Pest Management, Uganda
- Gender mainstreaming in flower farms, Naivasha, Kenya
- Organic tea production in Kerala, India

#### **4. SARD Initiative Theme III: Promoting good practices for SARD**

##### **a. Identifying and documenting good practices: the *Repertory of Good Practices and Guide to produce a succinct description of a SARD Good Practice***

The *Repertory of Good Practices and Guide to produce a succinct description of a SARD Good Practice* constitute among the greatest achievements of the Initiative. A concerted effort among a range of partner organizations<sup>8</sup> since the WSSD resulted in the following:

- A repertory of approximately 70 SARD related Good Practices has been produced and are available in English, French, Spanish and Arabic. <http://www.fao.org/sard/en/init/1574/2225/1846/index.html>
- The good practices are original and have had demonstrated environmental, social and economic benefits at community level. They add value to and update existing databases of SARD good practices (<http://www.fao.org/sard/en/init/1574/2225/1507/index.html>)
- They have all been documented in a clear, standard template, which emphasizes tangible outputs and are all approximately 4-6 pages long.
- They represent a focussed effort to capitalise on the experiences of many development projects and community based initiatives, mostly drawn from civil society submissions, global and national consultations with Major Groups and government stakeholders, as well as from FAO field experiences
- They provide succinct, clear and inspiring solutions to a range of SARD related challenges at national and local level
- The repertory contains Good Practices that concern not only agricultural production but rural development more generally. It is potentially a very useful tool for national civil society organizations all over the world
- They promote the sharing of experiences and knowledge at national, regional and international level.

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<sup>8</sup> These good practices were identified and documented through the in kind efforts and financial support from Major Groups and a range of civil society organizations (including RIMISP, SEI, Movimondo, CERFE, and others), financial and human resource support from FAO's Regular Programme, financial contributions from the Governments of Canada, Italy, and Norway, and partner projects funded by the Government of Germany, and from IFAD.

The *Guide to produce a succinct description of a SARD Good Practice* is a unique and valuable methodological tool designed to assist Civil Society Organizations in defining, appraising and describing a SARD Good Practice. It has been used by civil society, governments and UN organizations to document good practices in Africa (Angola, Burkina Faso, Democratic Republic of Congo, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Kenya, Malawi, Mali, Namibia, Niger, South Africa, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia, Zimbabwe), Asia and the Pacific (Bhutan, India, Japan, Laos, Mongolia, Nepal, Papua New Guinea, Philippines, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Vietnam), Central Asia and the Near East (Syria, Tajikistan,) and Latin America and the Caribbean (Bolivia, Brazil, Guatemala, Guyana, Honduras, Nicaragua, Panama, Peru, Surinam, Trinidad, Venezuela). It is available in English, French, Spanish and Portuguese and can be downloaded here: <http://www.fao.org/sard/en/init/1574/2225/1846/index.html>

The SARD Initiative *Guide to produce a succinct description of a SARD Good Practice* has had an important catalytic effect. The *Guide* was developed and tested by the SARD Initiative, drawing on and simplifying a more complex methodology developed by a SARD Initiative partner organization: the GTZ funded Sustainet project which developed Guidelines for “*Self-Assessing Good Practices and Scaling-up Strategies in Sustainable Agriculture*” (available here: <http://www.sustainet.org/en/information-office.htm>) and also generated, in collaboration with the SARD Initiative and FAO, two publications containing 23 good practices related to organic farming, land and water management, and tapping new products and new markets in India and to policy changes and approaches to scaling up sustainable agriculture approaches in Kenya and Tanzania. The SARD Initiative refined this methodology following a “retrospective analysis” in Honduras, Zimbabwe and the Philippines (2003-2004) of community experiences that had been billed as “good practices” 5 to 10 years previously, to identify lessons about which aspects of these projects/experiences proved most sustainable long after project completion.

The SARD Initiative good practice methodology also formed the basis of the good practice database developed by FAO’s Special Programme for Food Security in Central America (PESA) database, which now contains a number of good practices from El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras and Nicaragua ([http://www.pesacentroamerica.org/pesa\\_ca/buenas\\_practicas.htm](http://www.pesacentroamerica.org/pesa_ca/buenas_practicas.htm)). FAO member governments at the 17th Session of its Committee on Agriculture (COAG) “*acknowledged that a GAP (good agricultural practice) approach may be a way to address goals of sustainable agriculture and rural development (SARD) through technical, voluntary, and non-regulatory practices*”. (<http://www.fao.org/DOCREP/MEETING/006/Y8704e.HTM>)

The SARD Initiative good practice framework and template have subsequently been further simplified and became the foundation for FAO’s documentation of Best Practices from its own experience (see [http://www.fao.org/bestpractices/index\\_en.htm](http://www.fao.org/bestpractices/index_en.htm) for 46 best practices as of April 2008) and are being used to support food security programmes in a number of countries.

Beyond the three main thematic areas of the Initiative upon which the Major Groups had originally reached consensus for its focus (good practices, fairer conditions of employment, and access to resources), the process of identifying and documenting demonstrated local good practices also yielded a significant number of good practices related to two other thematic areas which are crucially important for SARD: managing natural resources sustainably and community empowerment.

The good practices in the field of **community empowerment** include (<http://www.fao.org/sard/en/init/1574/2225/1846/index.html>):

- Farmer to Farmer Extension System in Kenya
- Farmer Field School for up-scaling soil management technologies, western Kenya
- Efficient water utilization through gravity irrigation, Kianguni, Kenya
- Agricultural Workers and Integrated Production and Pest Management, Uganda
- Participatory fisheries Monitoring, Control and Surveillance (MCS) of small scale fishing zone, Guinea
- Afforestation initiative, Kakamega, Kenya
- Community-managed pastoralist slaughterhouse Keekonvokie, Kenya
- Mapping and documentation exercise on property grabbing among orphans and vulnerable children, Zambia (Legal empowerment of the poor)
- Capacity building of local community members in claiming land title deeds, Nyando basin, Kenya (Legal empowerment of the poor)
- Participatory technology development, Masvingo, Zimbabwe
- Reducing human-elephant conflict and ensuring farmers' food security around Kakum Conservation Area, Ghana
- Rural savings and credit scheme, Kiamuhu self help group, Gatundu, Kenya
- Farmer field school to enhance revenue generation and social cohesion, Democratic Republic of Congo
- Box gardens for vulnerable households, Kitwe, Zambia
- Mixed farming system, Kisii, Kenya
- Kenya Pastoralist Week
- Animal production system as an alternative for auto-development, Honduras
- Participatory Guarantee Systems for marketing organic products, Brazil
- Organic tea production in Kerala, India
- Non pesticide Management in Andhra Pradesh, India
- Community-based watershed development in Rajasthan, India
- Empowerment of marginalized communities through a watershed project in Andhra Pradesh, India
- Village Extension Workers Project, Papua New Guinea
- Success case replication, Asia
- Mushroom production training for disabled people, Thailand
- Recycling organic garbage cooperative city plan, Yamagata Prefecture, Japan

The good practices for **managing natural resources sustainably** include the following (<http://www.fao.org/sard/en/init/1574/2225/1846/index.html>):

- Conservation agriculture for smallholder farmers in dry land areas, Laikipia District, Kenya
- Integrated crop-livestock farming system, Burkina Faso
- Fertilizer micro-dosing and warrantage credit system for small-scale farmers in the Sahel
- Conservation Agriculture for sustainable crop production, Tanzania
- Forest plantation development system for equitable benefit-sharing, Ghana
- Community based forest management among pastoralist communities, Suledo forest, Tanzania
- Participatory technology development, Masvingo, Zimbabwe

- Establishment of small and medium forest-based enterprises, The Gambia
  - Promoting farmer innovation in farmer field schools, Kenya
  - Promotion of organic agriculture, Bungoma District, Kenya
  - Mixed farming system, Kisii, Kenya
  - Soybean (*Glycine max*) promotion for improved nutrition and soil fertility in smallholder farms, East Africa
  - Introduction of commercial crops in the cultivation of garden produce in Guaimaca, Honduras
  - Establishment of agro-ecological seed networks in the States of Barinas and Portuguesa, Venezuela
  - Capacity building and competition to improve management of natural resources in Sierra Sur, Peru
  - Income Generation with Sabila (*Aloe Vera*) Living Barriers, Honduras
  - Soil and water conservation practices by indigenous Chorotegas in Totogalpa, Nicaragua
  - Management of Terraces and 'Bofedales' in the Communities of Chua Vislaya, Bolivia
  - Sustainable production of Andean camelids in the highlands, Bolivia
  - Proderqui programme of forest incentives (PINFOP) El Quiche, Guatemala
  - "Nainu" agriculture: an alternative for the management of natural forests, Panama
  - Introduction of aquaculture to rice farmers, Guyana and Suriname
  - Rainfed sericulture in Karnataka, India
  - Self-reliant farming for food security and sovereignty, Maharashtra, India
  - Non pesticide Management in Andhra Pradesh, India
  - Forest Home Garden in Maharashtra, India
  - Community Based Forest Management in Northern Mindanao, Philippines
  - Biodiversity based Sustainable Agriculture, in Uttaranchal, India
  - Water management for Micro-Watersheds in Orissa, India
  - Community-based watershed development in Rajasthan, India
  - Empowerment of marginalized communities through a watershed project in Andhra Pradesh, India
  - Landshaping in West Bengal, India
  - Low Cost Drip Irrigation, Jhikhu Khola watershed, Nepal
  - Landcare approach: Natural vegetative filter strips for soil erosion control, Philippines
  - Devolving management right to natural forest to local people, Dak Lak province, Central Highlands of Vietnam
  - Rangeland rehabilitation and establishment of a wildlife reserve in the Al Badia Region, Syria
- b. Supporting national, regional and international efforts to scale up and replicate SARD Good Practices and successful experiences**

The next section provides some “snapshots” of SARD Initiative efforts to support the up scaling and replication of good practices, primarily at the national and regional levels.

### **International efforts to scale-up good practices**

At the international level a joint FAO/GTZ/Sustainet Workshop was organized on *Up-scaling of SARD Good Practices* (Rome, 05/2006) to identify promising methodologies for up-scaling good practices at local, national and/or regional levels. A number of opportunities and

recommendations for future collaboration between the SARD Initiative, GTZ and the responsible FAO services for Good Agricultural Practices<sup>9</sup>, the Livestock, Environment and Development Initiative (LEAD)<sup>10</sup>, and Technology for Agriculture: Proven Technologies for Smallholders (TECA) databases<sup>11</sup> were defined.

Support was also provided to a range of partner efforts to document, exchange, and scale up good practices internationally. Most significant among these were:

- the *Global Learning Opportunity* organized, in collaboration with the International Farming Systems Association/Major Group Focal Point for Scientific and Technological Communities, implemented and reported on at the FAO and IFAD co-sponsored 8th Symposium of the International Farming Systems Association (IFSA), entitled *Farming Systems and Poverty: Making a Difference Global Learning Opportunity (GLO)* (Rome, 31/10-4/11/2005). A **SARD Good Practice workshop** was also held in which some 60 participants analyzed issues, constraints and solutions associated with identifying, assessing, sharing and up-scaling good practices. The results can be found on <http://www.fao.org/sard/en/init/1364/index.html>
- a Workshop on *Linking Local Learners* (during the IFSA-GLO (30/10/2005)) was organized and 25 Civil society representatives and Major Group Focal Points were trained to use a *Linking Local Learners Platform*, an internet service that supports groups of local learners from around the world to pool their knowledge and share their expertise in a community of practice (see *Linking Local Learners Internet Learning Support Service* (<http://www.linkinglearners.net/> )
- good practice exchanges at the International Conference for Agrarian Reform and Rural Development (2006)
- use of the good practice methodology through a number of FAO's Special Programme for Food Security projects
- Sustainet and ZALF's efforts to develop a pre-assessment tool for projects that supports agricultural good practices regarding their sustainability, climate change responsiveness, and potential for scaling-up (*Rapid Tool for SCAPT*).

The SARD Initiative also worked to support **the incorporation of good practices in project settings**. A **pilot FAO-Italy Sustainable Development Facility (2004-6)** (GCP/INT/938/ITA) helped to identify and exchange project relevant good practices, strengthen the poverty focus, and improve sustainable benefits of a number of on-going FAO projects. This also generated the publication of a ***SARD Project Toolkit: a resource guide for promoting SARD in projects and programmes*** (2006) which provides an entry point into the many frameworks, approaches and tools that have been developed to promote sustainability in agricultural and rural development projects and helps readers to understand the scope of tools available, develop an initial understanding of them, compare the different tools, choose which tools are relevant for their specific needs, operating contexts and project objectives, and identify tools to investigate in further detail. (<ftp://ftp.fao.org/docrep/fao/009/ag249e/ag249e00.pdf> )

In addition, two policy briefs were prepared, one on ***SARD and scaling up good practices*** (<ftp://ftp.fao.org/SD/SDA/SDAR/sard/SARD-upscaling%20good%20practices%20->

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<sup>9</sup> FAO's GAP Database can be accessed here: [http://www.fao.org/prods/GAP/home/database\\_en.htm](http://www.fao.org/prods/GAP/home/database_en.htm)

<sup>10</sup>The LEAD platform can be found here: <http://www.virtualcentre.org/>

<sup>11</sup> The TECA database and other FAO technology related databases can be found here: [http://www.fao.org/sd/teca/index\\_en.asp](http://www.fao.org/sd/teca/index_en.asp)

[%20english.pdf](http://ftp.fao.org/SD/SDA/SDAR/sard/SARD-GAP%20-%20english.pdf)) and another on *SARD and Good Agricultural Practices* ([ftp://ftp.fao.org/SD/SDA/SDAR/sard/SARD-GAP%20-%20english.pdf](http://ftp.fao.org/SD/SDA/SDAR/sard/SARD-GAP%20-%20english.pdf)), to assist senior government decision makers in understanding why scaling up efforts are important and to orient them about alternative mechanisms for different practices, market, and country contexts.

Good practices were also disseminated through the preparation and dissemination of the *SARD Initiative Newsletter* and the **FAO websites on SARD** (<http://www.fao.org/sard/en/sard/1888/index.html>) and the **SARD Initiative** (<http://www.fao.org/sard/en/init/2224/index.html>) which the SARD Initiative developed and maintained, and which attempted to provide a forum for partner accomplishments related to SARD, as well as a coordinated vision of FAO's work in this area.

A number of **Committee on Agriculture (COAG)** sessions and side events also provided opportunities for stakeholders to share and exchange good practices. A particularly dynamic example of this was the *Side Event on Civil Society and SARD* at the 19<sup>th</sup> session of COAG (2005) which involved spokespersons from farmers, NGOs, and business and industry Major Groups, as well as Government, and can be found here: <http://www.fao.org/sard/en/init/1597/1402/index.html> .

A key approach shared by SARD Initiative stakeholders is the emphasis on ensuring **good practice to policy links**. In addition to the policy maker exposure visits to good practice sites that were used in a number of countries (see below) to shape better policy, the SARD Initiative also extracted some of the key findings from good practice experiences and incorporated them into a new *SARD & ...policy brief series* (2007-2008). The SARD policy briefs were published in four languages in partnership with other UN agencies, governments and civil society partners to support national decision makers to implement Sustainable Agriculture and Rural Development and included the following 21 titles: agricultural workers\*, child labour\*, organic agriculture\*, the role of agriculture in poverty reduction, agricultural trade\*, rural enterprise, climate change, children and youth\*, rural property rights, bio-energy, agro-ecology\*, farmers' organizations\*, migration, Indigenous Peoples\*, women\*, agricultural biodiversity, livestock\*, conservation agriculture, mountain regions, Good Agricultural Practices (GAP), and scaling up good practice\*. The 11 briefs with asterisks above were developed primarily to support Major Group efforts to articulate the policy options that Governments should consider to address their concerns or were developed in response to a Major Group and civil society expression of interest. The briefs have been distributed to all of FAO's membership, decentralized offices, and key partners and are now beginning to be used in national policy making processes.

Another effort to support good policies through improved Government capacities to implement SARD took the form of a France and Japan funded FAO project called **The Farming Systems Evolution for SARD Project** (GCP/INT/819/MUL, 2004-2006) which aimed at enhancing national and decentralised capacities to plan, implement and evaluate SARD through participatory processes drawing on country case studies and regional workshops in Honduras (maize/bean), Mali (cereal/root crop) and Philippines (rain-fed lowland rice) (see <http://www.fao.org/sard/en/sard/754/942/index.html> ).

The Governments of Switzerland, Japan, and France also supported efforts to develop improved SARD policies, but focused specifically in mountain regions, in the FAO project on **SARD in Mountain Regions** (GCP/GLO/136/MUL). This has been one of the most dynamic

SARD initiatives, in that it adopted the SARD Initiative's three focus themes in an international conference held in Adelboden, Switzerland (2002) and agreed to work with the SARD Major Group focal points. The fact that this operated as a project with regular funding greatly strengthened its outputs and impacts, as well as its political leverage through the Adelboden group, "a platform for discussion of policies and policy instruments, exchange of experience, and preparation of initiatives" consisting of different stakeholders (civil society, governments and international organizations) from all regions of the world. More information on this project can be found at: <http://www.fao.org/sard/en/sardm/home/index.html>



## National and regional efforts to scale-up good practices

### Kenya (and Tanzania)

In **Kenya**, with SARD Initiative support, national SARD stakeholders selected a local learning network (Kenya Freedom from Hunger Council) to facilitate national processes for identifying and replicating community good practices related to SARD. This joint effort between CSOs and the Government of Kenya was intended to help reinforce Kenya's Strategy for the Revitalization of Agriculture, its Rural Development Strategy and Poverty Reduction Strategy processes. The SARD Initiative and the local learning network mobilized more than fifty civil society organizations that operate either at local/grassroots or national levels. These stakeholders assisted in the identification of nine **SARD Good Practices**. Six exchanges took place (May to June 2006) to enable community spokespersons representing approximately 1,000 people, to learn about, test, replicate and adapt SARD good practices developed by other communities.

A second Kenya-based initiative has been the national SARD launch in Kenya and subsequent support to the **Kenya Livestock Working Group** (KLWG) and the mobilization of additional resources to support continuation of its work. The Working Group helps to identify, up-scale and replicate SARD Good Practices and build practice-to-policy links to enable pastoralist communities to secure their livelihoods. A four-day workshop for pastoralists and other national stakeholders (Kaijado, Kenya, 14-17/3/06) was held to raise awareness of programme and policy implications at local and national decision making levels. This work required the support and resources from all stakeholders to enable effective civil society leadership at local level and built on one of their priorities (Livestock). SARD Initiative support to NGOs in Kenya and internationally, who prioritize livestock as a key issue, has proven catalytic in enabling the KSWG to adapt Farmer Field School approaches to the needs of stakeholders along this value chain.

Thirdly, the SARD Initiative helped with the Promotion of demonstrated Conservation Agriculture good practices in Kenya and Tanzania (supported by Germany, GTZ-Sustainet), as well as facilitated more systematic monitoring of social, economic and environmental impacts of conservation agriculture (from June 2004) (see <http://www.fao.org/sard/en/sard/754/2322/2317/index.html> ). **The Conservation Agriculture for Sustainable Agriculture and Rural Development (CA for SARD) Project**<sup>12</sup> helped to facilitate and accelerate the adoption and adaptation of profitable conservation agriculture practices by small farmers in three districts of Tanzania and Kenya, primarily by working through farmer field schools. More specific policy advice on Conservation Agriculture, generated by the SARD Initiative and partner organizations, can be found here: <ftp://ftp.fao.org/SD/SDA/SDAR/sard/SARD-conservation-agri%20-%20english.pdf>

### **West Africa**

Following a review of good practices in the small scale fisheries sector in Senegal, Gambia, Guinea-Bissau and Guinea, the SARD Initiative identified and documented two good practices. In the Gambia, with support from the Government of Norway and in close collaboration with FAO's small scale fisheries experts (FIIT), capacity building assistance was provided (2006) to upscale one good practice by strengthening and legalizing fish dryer and smoker community based-organizations in the Gambia to improve post harvest processing methods. Based on an expressed demand and again with Government of Norway support, artisanal fishing cooperatives in the Gambia were provided with training in Safety at Sea. The SARD Initiative also helped to document and disseminate a second good practice, from FAO's work in Guinea, involving participatory fisheries Monitoring, Control and Surveillance (MCS) of small scale fishing zones, which has resulted in a 60% decline in industrial trawler incursions into zones reserved for small-scale maritime fisheries, resulting in improved incomes for poor fishers and better protection of fish spawning zones. ([ftp://ftp.fao.org/SD/SDA/SDAR/sard/Fisheries\\_participatory\\_surveillance\\_Guinea.pdf](ftp://ftp.fao.org/SD/SDA/SDAR/sard/Fisheries_participatory_surveillance_Guinea.pdf))

### **Vietnam**

From 1998 to 2001 the Stockholm Environment Institute (SEI), in collaboration with the Asian Development Bank, the UNEP Resource Center for Asia and the Pacific and the Mekong River Commission, implemented a project for development of a Strategic Environmental Framework for the Greater Mekong Region. The project created a Strategic Platform, based on a combination of analytical, participatory and policy-oriented processes,

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<sup>12</sup> This project was funded by the German Ministry of Agriculture and Consumer Protection (BMVEL).



which is now being used to guide investment decisions in the transport, water resources development and environmental sectors in the region. During 2005, SEI joined forces with the SARD Initiative to develop methodological tools for national implementation of SARD and prepare a funding proposal for support to regional and national activities in the Mekong that would build on what has already been achieved. Although the proposal is still awaiting funding, the plan is to define and introduce an approach for self-empowerment of marginalized rural people to enable them to participate more effectively in governance processes for SARD, initially in Vietnam and subsequently in all interested countries of the sub-region (<http://www.sei.se/policy/sef/index.html>).

### **India**

The SARD Initiative helped to support Major Group brainstorming workshops in Delhi and Pune (2006) to identify possible entry points for up-scaling SARD good practices in the country. The newly promulgated National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA) was identified as a key opportunity, so FAO facilitated interagency discussions through the UN facilitated interagency platform called "Solutions Exchange" to identify how best to integrate SARD within the NREGA. This resulted in the publication of a booklet, with consolidated replies, on *Guidelines on how to promote SARD through implementation of the Indian Employment Guarantee Act*, which identified pro-poor labour intensive practices that promote environmental conservation and/or economic growth (i.e. rehabilitation of soil and natural resources, water harvesting, rural investment/infrastructure), while simultaneously providing social protection opportunities for poor labourers supported through the NREGA. In collaboration with an Indian NGO, BAIF and with funding from Norway, a study, publication and training module were prepared on the *Maharashtra Experience with Employment Guarantee Scheme* (2008), which provides lessons on how employment based social safety nets can be used to support SARD good practices. In this way, the SARD Initiative promoted fair conditions of employment, strengthened implementation of the National Rural Employment Guarantee Act, and reinforced the capacity of government officials and line managers responsible to implement SARD good practices, lessons, and participatory approaches.

### **Latin America**

To identify SARD good practices throughout the Latin America region, focusing especially on **Bolivia, Ecuador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, and Peru**, FAO signed a letter of agreement with the Centro Latino Americano para el Desarrollo Rural (RIMISP) (2-5/06). Through the projects of FAO and other organizations in these countries, RIMISP identified and evaluated fifteen (15) community level SARD good practices related to natural resource management (6/2006). These good practices were documented according to the SARD Initiative standard template. (<http://www.fao.org/SARD/en/init/1574/2225/2899/index.html> )

The SARD Initiative also supported the testing of **methodologies for SARD community exchanges and policy maker exposure visits** to promote adoption of the selected practices and to strengthen the practice-to-policy links. This resulted in the establishment of a **learning network of communities and farmers groups** who are working to implement SARD in Latin America. To promote learning and uptake of good practices, sixteen (16) small producer organizations from the six countries shared information and lessons about the fifteen (15) demonstrated SARD good practices related to soil and water management, biodiversity conservation and sustainable use of natural resources, indigenous knowledge and technologies, and payment for environmental services in a one week community exchange

workshop (Bolivia, 5/2006). Participants had the opportunity to visit four (4) good practices in the high plateau region and made proposals on how to adapt and replicate the most promising practices. Afterwards, meetings with seven (7) policymakers were held to share the lessons learned from this experience and analyze the implications these SARD good practices have for better national policies.

Sustainable Agriculture and Rural Development



people shaping their sustainable futures

## Innovative elements



- Recognition of all stakeholders' responsibility for SARD
- Communities are in the lead
- Harvesting local experiences
- Direct dialogue between the poor and policy makers
- Community exchanges, peer-to peer learning



## B. Lessons learned

1. **Creating both opportunities and challenges through new ways of working.** The SARD Initiative is an experiment with a new way of working, in which multiple partners operate on separate tracks towards a common goal in the form of a loose alliance or coalition. The Initiative is united by a shared philosophy of work (definition of SARD, thematic focus, focus on recognizing demonstrated community based good practices which bring combined social, economic and environmental benefits, strengthening good practice-to-policy links, capacity development through peer learning, the value of multi Major Group and multi stakeholder perspectives and efforts, commitment to people centred approaches and to poverty reduction). On the down side, in practice, funding occurred separately to different organizations rather than through a single organization or project. While this provides opportunities for civil society (and other partners) to obtain resources directly for and lead specific initiatives, it also creates challenges in terms of information flow, coherence, and transparency as no single partner has full access to all information and it is difficult to report and to ensure synergies in all cases.
  
2. **Striking a balance between inclusiveness and effectiveness.**
  - a. The emphasis on participation and inclusiveness of all Major Groups from the beginning of the SARD Initiative resulted in some difficulty in reaching cross-Major Group consensus on the SARD Initiatives' focus, beyond broad and rather ambitious objectives, priorities, and thematic areas. In practice, many SARD Initiative partners concentrated their efforts only on those themes or objectives that were directly relevant to their own organization or Major Group. **While the**

**existence of multiple, broad objectives are a valuable rallying point for advocacy efforts, they are less conducive to the operational needs of a nascent multi-stakeholder partnership seeking to develop a coherent strategy and achieve clear impacts on the ground.** In the end, the SARD Initiative did find its footing and achieved an impressive range of results, with minimal funding and maximal support from civil society, but it took some time and, as yet, follow-up and diffusion of the results have been somewhat limited.

- b. A results rather than process orientation resulted in FAO concentrating its support to the SARD Initiative on a number of relatively clear, limited areas, particularly in support of Workers and Trade Unions, Indigenous Peoples, Farmers, and the Scientific and Technological Communities. In this sense, FAO support across Major Groups was somewhat imbalanced and achievement of results sometimes took precedence over thorough and inclusive processes. Donor pressure to report on quantitative results in relatively short time frames was particularly difficult for some partners with different working cultures and representational and consultative processes to accept. The reality is that multi-stakeholder participatory processes can be very time consuming and require specialised human resources, particularly for communication. **Getting the process right undoubtedly yields the most sustainable results, as good processes build capacities, raise awareness, and offer opportunities for the powerless to have a voice. But combining good process with the simultaneous achievement of tangible, objectively verifiable, short term impacts is no simple feat.** In the future, the SARD Initiative should invest more effort on identifying and channelling support towards reinforcing on-going processes rather than supporting new, relatively visible efforts that may raise expectations but yield only short term benefits.

### 3. **The importance of clear institutional frameworks at multiple levels.**

- a. The establishment of voluntary, results oriented and time bound partnerships apparently offered an opportunity to renew commitments and action associated with the implementation of Agenda 21. However, a number of factors have hindered these efforts and largely stem from the way partnership initiatives were initially conceived and its fit with the governing body and planning and budget frameworks of the UN agencies involved. **For FAO, the SARD Initiative facilitator, the Initiative fell within an institutional vacuum, as it was launched in 2002, two short years after *FAO Strategic Framework 2000-2015* was approved and shortly before the organization embarked on its reform process (2005). The short time allotted by CSD for the identification and launching of new partnerships within the WSSD preparatory process was strongly biased in favour of pre-existing partnerships and constituted a handicap for this new multi-Major Group/UN/Government effort,** particularly as there was no way in which FAO could obtain Governing Body approval in the time allotted. As a result, the Initiative never clearly became part of FAO's regular programme of work and budget and was only once formally presented to an FAO official decision making structure (its Committee on Agriculture in 2005), in which many of the government decision makers from Ministries of Agriculture had only a partial knowledge of the CSD process.
- b. **Unclear institutional basis through CSD and FAO's regular mechanisms of engagement with civil society.** As a result of the above, a number of FAO staff perceived the Initiative to fall outside of and beyond the Organization's main mandate. This was complicated by the fact that the historic machinery which had

moderated FAO's interaction in the CSD (the IAWG) had been abolished prior to WSSD, with no clear instruction regarding whether the Task Manager roles were to be continued or made obsolete, further undermining FAO's role as facilitator among its staff. The main policy basis for the SARD Initiative's work was the importance given to Partnerships and Strategic Alliances in the *FAO Strategic Framework for 2000-2015* and the existence of an *FAO Policy and Strategy for Cooperation with NGOs and CSO's*.<sup>13</sup> However, even this created challenges since the main mechanism through which FAO engages with civil society, the International Planning Committee for the World Food Summit: *five years later* (the IPC), was uneasy with the SARD Initiative's alternative mode of engagement with civil society through Major Group focal points, and particularly with the presence of the Scientific and Technological Communities, Business and Industry, and Local Authorities Major Groups, who could wield disproportionate influence in a forum which was designed to give priority to the interests of relatively under-privileged social movements, small farmers, fishers, forest users and pastoralist peoples operating in the fields of food and agriculture. A policy decision was needed and obtained in 2004 clarifying that FAO's work with the nine Major Groups was an appropriate alternative basis for engagement with civil society. Interestingly, after the *Dialogue on Land and Agriculture* at CSD-8 in 2000 and the subsequent *SARD Forum* that was organized as a side event at FAO's Committee on Agriculture in 2001, the IPC itself revised its structure to distinguish focal points for Indigenous Peoples, Workers, Children and Youth, and Women, selectively borrowing from the Major Group concept to ensure a broader representation of civil society perspectives.

- c. Another source of institutional uncertainty was **the reform process within FAO** and the UN system more broadly, which intensified from late 2005 onwards and resulted in ambiguities about, and ultimately shifts in, responsibility for SARD within FAO.
- d. **A significant coping strategy in the face of institutional and financial uncertainty was the recruitment of a cadre of highly qualified and capable volunteers to support the SARD Initiative** (see <http://www.fao.org/sard/en/init/partic/1343/index.html>). This introduced a level of dynamism and energy in the Initiative's work, at only a minor administrative/logistical cost to FAO, while building the capacities of youth to understand, advocate for and implement SARD. However, this coping strategy also created a high level of turn over in the FAO SARD team and limited its institutional memory about the Initiative.
- e. In sum, the management of a multi-stakeholder partnership requires a stable and appropriate institutional framework in which staff specialised in building CSO capacity are able to dedicate a considerable amount of time and a substantial level of financial resources. Institutional and financial uncertainties resulted in FAO not being able to establish a constant SARD Coordinator or Coordinating team to oversee and support the Initiative; instead, this work was carried out by FAO's SARD focal point, as an additional and piecemeal responsibility beyond her full time regular programme work. Only with an appropriate institutional framework

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<sup>13</sup> *FAO Policy and Strategy for Cooperation with Non-Governmental and civil Society Organizations*, FAO 1999 Rome. More recently (2006-2008), two independent evaluations have called upon FAO to promote partnerships with CSO/NGOs, but existing administrative mechanisms continue to restrict the options available.

and adequately resourced and constant coordinating team can such a partnership have a reasonable chance of succeeding in aligning international agency, donor and CSO stakeholder interests with those of country and community level development actors.

4. **The significance of sufficient and regular financial resources.** There was a clear international consensus on the need for multi-stakeholder partnerships to help achieve Agenda 21 and broad declared governmental support for the SARD Initiative, in particular, at the WSSD. Yet only limited official commitments made by the international community to multi-stakeholder partnerships in achieving SARD have materialised into *de facto* support for such voluntary initiatives. In theory, political will is there, but in practice it has been, at least at times for the SARD Initiative, absent.
  - a. In the absence of an institutional and programmatic framework through which to allocate regular programme human and financial resources to make it happen, **FAO's Director General (2003) offered** the following **guidance** and 1) clarity that FAO could facilitate the Initiative and that it was to be undertaken only with extra-budgetary resources; 2) an exchange of letters by the Assistant Director General (ADG) of the then- Sustainable Development Department with Major Group Focal Points (August 2003) proposing that a joint implementation framework be drawn up in the form of a proposal; 3) the SARD Initiative being designated by FAO's Director General (September 2003) as a High Visibility Programme for WSSD follow-up.
  - b. Unfortunately, this **directive to fund the Initiative exclusively with extra-budgetary resources came at precisely the moment at which government support to FAO's multi-donor projects was on the decline**. As a result, despite the joint FAO-Major Group drafting of a project proposal to support the SARD Initiative (2005, GCP/GLO/139/MUL: *Support to the SARD Initiative: A Global Partnership to promote Sustainable Agricultural and Rural Development*), including a list of Major Group contributions that merited separate and direct financing, no donors stepped forward to support this project proposal. Undoubtedly, some Major Groups may have been disappointed with the limited resources beyond FAO staff time for the Initiative, possibly in part because of some confusion about FAO's mandate as a funding agency rather than the technical and policy organization that it is. The FAO facilitator of the SARD Initiative, nevertheless, attempted to mobilize small amounts of funding that could be rationalized under other thematic areas through standard donor cooperation agreements with FAO (i.e. the Norway PCA) or in response to government interests to work on related areas (i.e. GCP/INT/938/ITA-FAO/ITALY Facility for Sustainable Development and Policy Implementation Assistance–Pilot Phase and GCP/RAF/390/GER and GCP/RAF/413/GER the Germany-supported Conservation Agriculture for SARD project). However, these agreements were primarily designed to reinforce other areas of the Organization's regular programme work or areas of comparative advantage, rather than to channel resources through FAO to this multi-stakeholder initiative. In a few cases, however, the FAO SARD team was successful in encouraging donors to allocate resources directly to different SARD Initiative stakeholders (i.e. to fund the Indigenous Peoples' Global Consultation), rather than going through FAO and in using FAO's extra-budgetary resources to contract Major Group services, under standard administrative agreements.
  - c. Even if extra-budgetary or regular programme resources had been available, it is questionable whether it would have been possible to fund a multi-Major Group

effort through FAO's existing administrative and financial mechanisms and in **the absence of a legal status for the SARD Initiative** or for the SARD Focal Points as mandated facilitators for larger Major Groups.

- d. Over time, insufficient financial resources hindered communication and dissemination of the achievements, impacts, and acquired knowledge from the SARD Initiative, as well as stock taking, monitoring, and reporting efforts. In sum, insufficient resources to establish a constant SARD Initiative coordinating team, administrative and legal restrictions in FAO, and its mandate for technical assistance rather than funding, limited the capacity of FAO to mobilize and financially manage resources effectively in the interests of a complex, multi-stakeholder undertaking.
5. **Building sustainability, outreach and impact.** The collaborative relationship between FAO, Major Groups and other partners, and particularly the support of civil society initiatives, produced a number of highly innovative and sustainable impacts that were far beyond what FAO could have achieved on its own. Collaboration with Major Groups, which began with the SARD Initiative, eventually benefited many programmes and activities of FAO as well, even those that were not directly linked with the Initiative. **An important lesson for UN agencies, is that they do not have to control a multi-stakeholder partnership in order to benefit from it.**
  6. **Shared messages are more powerful than lone voices.** The SARD Initiative has demonstrated that sometimes the best spokespersons for FAO's messages and work are those other than its own representatives. For example, Major Group insights contributed to a definition of "good" practice as a multifaceted experience, the assessment of which varies according to the perspectives of different stakeholders, and over which no single agency or technical organization has complete assessment capacity. Partner efforts at testing alternative methods made it clear that a self-assessment methodology is the most viable and cost-effective means to regularly document good practices over the long run, particularly in contexts of restricted resources. Self-assessments, however, can present a somewhat biased picture, so third party references, peer review, independent evaluations, and retrospective assessments are valuable complementary means of verification, depending upon the resources available. This is just one example of how **shared messages about SARD through common policy briefs, shared acknowledgement of good practice, and joint support for SARD at CSD and elsewhere are invaluable social and political assets that should not be underestimated.**