『国際開発研究フォーラム』25（2004. 2）
Forum of International Development Studies, 25（Feb. 2004）

Strengthening NGO Accountability through Beneficiary Participation:

Lessons Learned from Two Cambodian NGOs

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Abstract

Now that NGOs are inclined to better identify and respond to beneficiary needs so as to secure program accountability, this paper addresses the role of beneficiary participation performed in this quest. Grounded on an analysis of two development projects in Cambodia, the study asserts that ability of beneficiaries to hold NGOs accountable in this stance seems to be determined by a 'meaningful' participation process which emphasizes their early inclusion (i.e., from the identification phase) and 'broad' involvement, and which most of all provides greater essence to 'transformative' mechanisms (i.e., shared decision making, collaboration and empowerment). In furtherance, the data appear that 'seniority' and 'organizational affiliation' instill emphatic determination on the accountability-demanding ability.

1. Introduction

Following development failures of governments in the 1980s, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have increasingly become an alternative vehicle for bi- and multi-lateral donors engaged in international development efforts since the 1990s (see, e.g., Korten, 1990; Clark, 1991; Carroll, 1992; Edwards & Hulme, 1992, 1995, 1996). There are presently at least 50,000 NGOs in developing countries, funded with more than US$10 billion by international financial institutions and developed nations (Petras & Veltmeyer, 2001). Underlying this preference is an intuitive assertion of 'panacea' quality contained within NGOs in ameliorating grassroots pauperization in the third world.

The notion of NGOs as a 'magic bullet' for poverty reduction, however, stands no longer unchallenged. The myth of NGO infallibility has been constantly unmasked by a mismatch between idealism and pragmatism and an inconsistency between rhetoric and reality. Consequently, NGOs have been called for better organizational and program accountability so as to scale up 'sustainable development impact' at the grassroots level (see, e.g., Edwards & Hulme, 1995; ICFCB, 1998). As for organizational accountability, the discipline of capacity building has been of vitality among the NGO community and its external environment.[1] NGOs are demanded to acquire professionalism in terms of organizational capacity. Meanwhile, they are under soaring pressure to better identify and respond to actual needs and interests of intended 'beneficiaries'[2] in order to maintain program accountability.

Participation of beneficiaries in projects has long been reckoned as a core in ensuring program

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accountability (e.g., Shah & Shah, 1995; Agrawal & Ribot, 1999; Blair, 2000; Fowler, 2000; Long, 2001; Kolavalli & Kerr, 2002). Notwithstanding, despite such a consensus, *how* actually beneficiaries can influence NGOs' interventions for better program accountability in the participation process often remains imprecise in the contemporary literature.

This paper examines the role of beneficiary participation in influencing NGOs to respond to beneficiaries' genuine needs and interests. Specifically, it addresses the question: What determines ability of beneficiaries to hold NGOs accountable in terms of responding to their needs and interests in the process of participation?

To answer the above research question, this paper commences with a brief review on the relationship between beneficiary accountability and participation in the context of development NGOs. The paper then conceptualizes a framework for dealing with this relationship and finally field tests the framework with two development projects of two Cambodian NGOs.

The following section reviews the linkage between NGO accountability to beneficiaries and beneficiary participation, focusing on beneficiary 'voice' articulated in the process of participation.

2. NGO Accountability, Beneficiary 'Voice' and Participation: A Review of Literature

2.1. A Model of NGO Accountability to Beneficiaries

While there are various different conceptions of accountability, this study applied an operational definition derived from Kearns (1996) and Cutt and Murray (2000), which considers beneficiary accountability: 'A process in which a provider organization responds to the needs of beneficiaries based on claimed mandates of responsibility.'

A commonly used model of accountability developed by Hirschman (1970) and further elaborated by Paul (1992) asserts that beneficiary accountability can be ensured when 'control' is augmented with 'exit' (i.e., the ability of beneficiaries to find alternative service providers) and 'voice' (i.e., the ability of beneficiaries to influence performance of the provider without seeking alternative providers). In the prevalent context of NGOs, exercising 'exit' is not realistically feasible for beneficiaries as NGOs usually operate in resource-scarce environments where needs are greater than supply[3] (Brett, 1993; Najam, 1996; Lewis, 2001). Expressing 'voice', thus, may be the only option for beneficiaries to influence NGOs' interventions to meet their needs and interests.

Revision of the literature to date unveils that in order for beneficiaries to articulate 'voice', they need to be accessible to information regarding NGOs' resources and activities and to participate 'meaningfully' in the development process.

2.2. Beneficiary Need for Information to Exercise 'Voice'

Experience from development projects discloses that to be able to assert 'voice' requires beneficiaries to have access to information on implementing agencies' resources and activities

(Kolavalli & Kerr, 2002; Long, 2001; Jenkins & Goetz, 1998 in Lewis, 2001; Chambers, 1983, 1997; Brett, 1993). Beneficiaries are placed in a position in which their ability to influence inappropriate or undesirable interventions is limited when they are ill-informed about NGOs' activities (Chambers, 1983, 1997; Brett, 1993). Yet, in reality, development beneficiaries get minimal access to information concerning agencies' resources and activities (Long, 2001; Petras & Veltmeyer, 2001; Cutt & Murray, 2000; Craig & Porter, 1997; Brett, 1993).

We can accordingly concede that access to information involving NGOs' resources and activities is the prerequisite for enabling beneficiaries to ensure NGOs account for meeting their needs and interests.

2.3. Beneficiary Need for 'Meaningful' Participation to Exercise 'Voice'

There is a consensus that the only way for beneficiaries to exert their 'voice' is partake in the development process. It is conceptually agreed that through participation processes in all phases of project cycle beneficiaries would be able to articulate their needs and interests to implementing agencies (e.g., Shah & Shah, 1995; Agrawal & Ribot, 1999; Blair, 2000; Fowler, 2000; Long, 2001; Kolavalli & Kerr, 2002).

However, despite their democratic, grassroots rhetoric, NGOs are hierarchical and in practice beneficiaries rarely partake in all project stages (e.g., Tendler, 1982; Najam, 1996; Craig & Porter, 1997; Edwards, Hulme & Wallace, 2000; Petras & Veltmeyer, 2001; Smillie & Hailey, 2001). If beneficiaries do take part at all, their participation is dominant in implementation stage but quite limited in other stages, particularly in identification and planning phases (Tendler, 1982). Moreover, the poor are often marginally involved in participation processes where local elite (i.e., the relatively well-off or more powerful, and at times males) influence or control programs (Tendler, 1982; Craig & Porter, 1997; Fowler, 1997; Lewis, 2001; Agarwal, 2001).

Worse, the process of need definition (if any) is often subjective and manipulated by NGOs (Najam, 1996; Craig & Porter, 1997; Petras & Veltmeyer, 2001; Smillie & Hailey, 2001). Participation very often means nothing more than asking beneficiaries to agree with what NGOs already intend to do. In many instances, NGOs just consult a few local people- usually in the form of "a meeting of grassroots activists for the poor"- to get the project approved (Petras & Veltmeyer, 2001: 132). In addition, not all articulated inputs and demands of beneficiaries are incorporated into the project. Only those fitting into the conditions and objectives set beforehand are accepted and included (Najam, 1996; Craig & Porter, 1997; Smillie & Hailey, 2001).

As presented above, even in instances where beneficiaries are included in the development process, the quality of their participation is often unsatisfactory that they are unable to express real 'voice'; beneficiaries are oftentimes co-opted and manipulated by NGOs. Against this background, therefore, beneficiaries need to be '*meaningfully*' engaged in the development process in order to hold NGOs

accountable in terms of responding to their needs and priorities.

Then, the question remains: what constitutes '*meaningful*' participation? Albeit a renowned and mainstream mantra, participation is yet righteously conceived and practiced by a good deal of development actors, including NGOs, themselves a vigorous advocate for it (as evidenced throughout the literature revised here and elsewhere). Its both misuses and abuses are particularly apparent in the development arena concerning the vulnerable and marginalized- the poor. Effective or meaningful participation per se is still vague and random in the current conception and practice. Following an attempt of definition, the section below conceptualizes 'meaningful' participation from three differential, but inter-woven, frontiers: dimensions, forms and mechanisms.

3. What 'Meaningful' Participation Entails: A Conceptual Framework

3.1. Definition of Participation

Participation is variably defined, with widely differing conceptions based on dissimilar political, ideological and economic interests and perspectives. One of the commonly applied definitions is: "...a process through which stakeholders influence and share control over development initiatives, decisions and resources which affect them" (World Bank, 1994: 1).

This definition emphasizes exerting influence and sharing control over critical aspects of the development process. Related to this concept, the preceding review of beneficiary involvement in NGOs' development work reflects three dimensions in the process of participation. The first is 'to what extent?', because engagement in implementation is insufficient to influence decision-making; the second is 'who participates?', since communities are heterogeneous; and the third is 'when to participate?', as the phase in which beneficiaries are included matters their ability to bargain within the process.

3.2. Dimensions of Participation

In this regard, Fowler (2000: 22-23) addresses the dimension of 'to what extent?' as "depth" of participation, 'who participates?' as "breadth" and 'when to participate?' as "timing".

Fowler's assessment of the three dimensions of participation is as follows:

(1) *Depth*, which is a measure of stakeholders' influence on decision-making.

(2) *Breadth*, which refers to the range of stakeholders involved, whose views and actions must be taken into account; and

(3) *Timing*, which relates to the stage of the process at which stakeholders are engaged.

What is of essence in Fowler's analysis is a balanced combination of these three dimensions of participation in the development process, which counts equal significance on each of them. Specifically, Fowler states that the intensity of ownership and commitment of participants is determined by the way the three aspects are approached and made to interact. Insufficient depth can result in

complacency or passive cooperation. When breadth is inadequate, decision-making becomes too dependent on a few participants and their interests. The timing of involvement influences the quality and soundness of negotiation. Inappropriate timing, or late inclusion of stakeholders, leads to "perceptions of tokenism, co-optation, disrespect and disempowerment" (p.22). Fowler continues that a well-functioning participation framework balances depth, breadth and timing in an active way based on local conditions. It is counter-productive once all aspects of participation become 'lopsided'.

Hence, we finally can conclude that participation processes should be time-sensitive and not cause a significant imbalance between depth and breadth. Then, how do we know whether depth and breadth are balanced? This question will depend on both forms and mechanisms of participation applied in the process.

3.3. Forms of Participation

Participation can take on multiple forms and serve many differential interests. It is of vital importance to precisely distinguish what these forms and interests are, for conceptual and practical ambiguity of participation can lead on to its misuses and abuses.

White (1996) establishes four forms of participation:

(1) The first form is *nominal*, when communities are included in the development process only for tokenistic display, without any operational function. This form of token involvement is created to show a level of superficial participation to external agencies, or it can be used to legitimize outsiders' decisions.

(2) The second form is *instrumental*, through which participants contribute resources (i.e., material, cash, information, labor or time). Its function serves as a means to an end, resulting in efficiency and effectiveness of development projects because of local commitment and ownership produced by the contribution.

(3) The third form is *representative*, where a certain group within the community gains leverage and influence and is therefore able to express its own interests and make its needs visible in the process. And

(4) The fourth- and the strongest- form is *transformative*, in which people find ways to consider options, make decisions and take actions on their own terms, without external influence or dominance. This sort of participation functions as both a means to an end and an end in itself; its standpoint holds that besides resulting in better projects, fostering people's confidence and ability to determine how to refine their own socio-economic well-being is the true centerpiece of development.

These forms of participation unfold some reflections associated with Fowler's dimensions of depth and breadth. Concerning breadth, the *representative* form could be the case of control and influence by local elite as presented earlier. Regarding depth, the *nominal* form presents vacuum participation,

offering a nil quality of contribution. As the term itself denotes, it is merely in the name of participation, without any active substance and thus any depth. On the contrary, the *instrumental* and *transformative* forms do comprise depth of participation, as participants are able to contribute, make decisions and act independently. But, the depth of *transformative* participation is likely to be relatively deeper than that of the *instrumental* one since the former allows opportunities for decision-making and influence-exerting, while the latter may provide fewer opportunities for this although participants do contribute something.

3.4. Mechanisms of Participation

Related to forms of participation is how to involve concerned subjects- the process of participation. As diverse as its concepts, participatory approaches and methods for engaging stakeholders are very varied, depending mainly on types of projects, development contexts and the quality of relationships between actors.

The World Bank (1994: 12) delineates six mechanisms employed in its project and policy work to facilitate participation:

(1) *Information-sharing*, which makes information available to local stakeholders such as through media, seminars, presentations and public meetings;

(2) *Consultation*, in which local stakeholders provide information at different stages such as through consultative meetings, and field visits and interviews;

(3) *Joint assessment*, which engages relevant stakeholders in analyzing local situations and the potential project by utilizing such methods as participatory assessment and evaluation, and beneficiary assessment;

(4) *Shared decision-making*, which enables stakeholders to influence on project design by allowing them to partake in planning, discussion and determination of positions, priorities and roles, and to make revisions and agreements on issues relative to the project. This would be done through workshops, retreats, meetings and public reviews;

(5) *Collaboration*, in which stakeholders hold a principal role in and responsibility for project implementation such as through joint committees, working groups and task forces; and

(6) *Empowerment*, which relates to capacity-building of stakeholders that would enable them to develop and manage their own initiatives; and eventually they would contribute more effectively to the project.

Premised upon White's forms of participation identified previously, the first three mechanisms contain some *instrumental* aspect, while the last three view participation as *transformative*. Moreover, these mechanisms present a weak-to-strong continuum in terms of 'depth' as measured by Fowler above (i.e., 'influence on decision-making'). (This confirms the earlier observation, which notices that the depth of *transformative* participation is likely to be relatively deeper than that of the *instrumental*

one). In many ways, the first three mechanisms, which promote joint learning and stakeholder inputs, lay the groundwork for the final three which generate more active and meaningful participation in terms of enabling 'influence and shared control' over development initiatives, decisions and resources. Somehow, the first three categories do not in themselves fulfill the progressive concept of participation, for information exchange does not necessarily mean genuine 'influence and shared control' over these critical elements.

3.5. A 'Meaningful' Participation Framework

Drawing upon the above analyses of dimensions, forms and mechanisms of participation, we suggest that a '*meaningful' participation framework* in the development process would compose:
(1) Both instrumental and transformative mechanisms of participation; and
(2) An appropriate balance among depth, breadth and timing of participation.

4. Research Hypothesis

Grounding on the literature review and conceptual framework, we hypothesize that ability of beneficiaries to hold NGOs accountable in terms of responding to their needs and interests in the process of participation could be determined by two factors: (1) depth and timing of their participation, and (2) their individual characteristics[4] (e.g., wealth, position, sex and so forth).

5. Methodology and Context of the Study

The research question of the study was explored through a synthetic analysis of case studies on two Cambodian NGOs' development projects, utilizing a quantitative-qualitative integrated approach. Semi-structured and open-ended interviews were held with project managers and beneficiaries. In furtherance of the interviews, project-site observations and informal talks with relevant stakeholders (namely, village heads, and village development committee 'VDC' chiefs and members) were also conducted in the field[5]. Beneficiary semi-structured responses were analyzed quantitatively, employing inferring statistical tools of bivariate correlation and multiple regression. Factual and perceptual data derived from the open-ended beneficiary responses, project managers interviews, on-site observations and informal talks were analyzed qualitatively in accordance with a technique of content analysis[6]. The qualitative analyses had a purpose to lend a validating corroboration to the quantitative findings where appropriate.

5.1. Synopsis of Organizational and Project Characteristics of the NGOs Case Studied

The two NGOs under study were selected from the directory of Cambodian NGOs 2000-2001 (CCC, 2000) based on their vision, mission and background of program activities. As summarized in Table 1, they were small-sized organizations executing small-scaled development projects within limited areas.

Table 1: Summary Organizational and Project Characteristics of the NGOs Case Studied

NGOs	Organizational Characteristics	Project Characteristics
KAWP	*Krom Akphiwat Phum (KAWP)* literally means ' a group for developing villages '. Established in Battambang in 1993, KAWP has 12 core staff and is currently working with 33 communities in 24 villages of 11 communes in 6 districts throughout the province. This NGO is in the course of their fourth integrated program phase (2002-2004). (Each program phase spans 3 or 4 years of relevant activities needed to be undertaken to improve the conditions of the villages economically and socially). The program* is being financed with an amount of approximately 500,000 US$, including overheads; of which almost 10% is from the NGO 's discretionary endowment and local funding sources.	The project case studied is one of 5 components included in the present program phase. Called ' Project for the Very Poor ', the project aims to reduce marginalization of the very poor by building their confidence and capacity to access resources through greater participation in village associations. The project covers 62 direct beneficiaries/families (24 males and 38 females) in 12 villages across the 6 districts. In each village an association of average 5 ' very poor ' members/families selected among the villagers was organized. Many of the very poor families were marginal beneficiaries of previous programs, some of whom both physically and socially excluded. Besides being trained in community development and organizing and agriculture (gardening and farming), the beneficiaries have been provided with vegetable seeds, fruit plants, animals (piglets and/or poultry) and gardening tools, among other necessary materials. Moreover, all were given ' food for work ' (rice) to dig a family pond nearby their house plot for raising fish and watering home gardens; and a few, without own home or rice land, were bought a piece of land for building a house/cottage or for farming. Within their associations, the beneficiaries also do savings for future own use and as they have to pay back in the long run costs of animals or land given to them.
AS	*Aphivat Strey (AS)* literally means ' develop women '. Localized in 1996 from Oxfam GB 's community development project (which started in 1991) in two villages in Battambang, AS is manned with 4 staff and 6 volunteers and is presently operating in three villages of a commune. In the third integrated program phase (2001-2003) (each phase spans 2 or 3 years), the NGO is currently undertaking 6 projects in the three villages. The program* is being assisted with totally external funding of around 100,000 US$, incorporating administrative costs.	The case studied project, ' Agriculture Project ', is intended to improve the living conditions of 60 direct beneficiaries/families (22 males and 38 females) in two of the three villages, particularly to enable them to attain food security throughout the year. Most of the families are returnees repatriated from Thai border camps and resettled in the villages since 1992 or 1993, and were beneficiaries of preceding programs who seemed to be left out in the process. The beneficiaries have been trained in agriculture (gardening and farming) and provided with rice and vegetable seeds, fruit plants, animals (piglets, cows and/or poultry) and gardening tools, along with other necessary items. Furthermore, many were given ' food for work ' (rice) to dig a family pond and irrigating canals around their house plot for raising fish and watering home gardens; and a few, without rice land, were bought a piece of farming land. The beneficiaries have to pay back in the long term costs of animals or land offered to them.

Note: *These two programs, matter-of-factly, were built on existing communities captured in earlier programs of the respective organizations.

Source: Based upon the interviews held with the project managers of the two organizations, KAWP (2001) and AS (2001).

The projects examined were both in the stage of implementation and contained certain common characteristics- i.e., beneficiary involvement, focus on the marginalized and disadvantaged, material and technical provision, and agriculture in nature. Somehow, the beneficiaries of *KAWP* were organized into groups whereas those of *AS* were engaged in the project individually.

Three essential reasons served the purpose of opting the organizations and projects for examination. First, the organizations were typical of Cambodian NGOs in terms of organizational (i.e., both human and financial) resources and program coverage[7]. Second, the projects possessed both developmental and participative aspects. Finally, the ongoing of the projects provided a crucial circumstance for observing participating activities of the beneficiaries. Nonetheless, diverse grades of

beneficiary participation should be foreseen across the cases, in spite of these invariabilities.

5.2. Participants Interviewed

In total, three managers (i.e., two of *KAWP* and one of *AS*) and seventy-five beneficiaries (i.e., 32 of *KAWP* and 43 of *AS*, which is approximately 62% of the sum population) of the two projects were interviewed[8] (see Table 2). Random sampling method was applied to choose the subjects for the beneficiary interviews. In the case of *KAWP*, the sampling procedure involved two steps. First, six of the twelve target villages were randomly selected. Then, the sample was chosen at random among the beneficiaries in the six villages. In the *AS* project, the sample was randomly opted from the beneficiaries in the two target villages. The objective of the random sampling was to capture a variety of beneficiary characteristics and therefore to minimize bias in demanding ability among both beneficiary populations. However, as the bulk of each beneficiary population were women, most of the samples were females (i.e., 87.50% of *KAWP* and 72.10% of *AS*).

The interviews were recorded verbatim; and where taping was impermissible for the sake of discretion, extensive notes were taken[9]. Particular attention was paid to dealing with semi-structured beneficiary questions. Extra relevant explanations and examples were provided when asking the subjects to do ordinal scales on the statements. This allowed the respondents to wholly grasp both the statements and scalings prior to rating and reasoning their answers.

Table 2: Numbers of Project Managers and Beneficiaries Interviewed

NGOs	Project Managers Interviewed			Project Beneficiaries					
				Sample Interviewed			Population		
	M***	F***	Total	M(% of Male Population)	F(% of Female Population)	Total(% of Population)	M	F	Total
KAWP**	1	1	2	4(16.66) (12.50)*	28(73.68) (87.50)*	32 (51.66)	24	38	62
AS	0	1	1	12(54.54) (27.90)*	31(81.57) (72.10)*	43 (71.66)	22	38	60
Total	1	2	3	16 (34.78)	59 (77.63)	75 (61.47)	46	76	122

Note: * indicates percentage of the respective sample; **: For *KAWP*, the two project managers were interviewed together; ***: *M* denotes male, while *F* stands for female.

5.3. Instruments and Measurement

Based on the literature review and conceptual framework, four multiple-item variables were established and asked in the beneficiary interviews (see the beneficiary interview questionnaire in Appendix 3). The variables included beneficiary contribution, participation, accountability- demanding ability and participation outcome. Beneficiary contribution was measured in terms of devoting information, labor, material, time and money to the projects by the beneficiaries. Participation was assessed by the levels of engagement by the beneficiaries in six mechanisms afore-illustrated: information sharing, consultation, joint assessment, shared decision making, collaboration and

empowerment. Accountability-demanding ability was evaluated by the ability of the beneficiaries in doing the following: (1) obtaining information relevant to the NGOs' resources and activities; (2) analyzing the information and based on the analysis demanding the NGOs for explanation and justification of their actions; and (3) eliciting appropriate responses from the NGOs. Finally, participation outcome was appraised through awareness of participation rights and roles, project ownership and commitment, and needs and interests satisfaction by the beneficiaries. All items were rated with a 6-point scale ranging from 0 (= not at all) to 5 (= very much).

A number of beneficiary background variables[10] were also formulated from the responses. They comprised:

(1) Age of the participant, taking a value of 1 for those who were or were below 45 years old, 2 for those over 45 years old;

(2) Number of children living with (1 = less than or equal to 3; 2 = more than 3). We used the number of children living with the participant, not the total number of children the participant had, as some participants had children staying away from home, working in the provincial towns or in other provinces.

(3) Education (1 = no schooling; 2 = with schooling). Schooling experience included informal, short- and long-term literacy courses.

(4) Organizational affiliation (1 = no; 2 = yes). For *KAWP* participants, organizational affiliation meant they or their family members belonged or belong to groups other than their own associations, such as credit/saving groups, cow/rice banks, agriculture associations, and healthcare associations. For *AS* participants, organizational affiliation implied they or their family members belonged or belong to such groups/associations. And,

(5) Wealth which composed: farming land (1 = no; 2 = yes), number of livestock (i.e., the total crude number of cattle, poultry, pigs and other animals), number of materials (i.e., the total crude number of bikes, bicycles, rice mills and other machines), and average annual income (i.e., the raw number of Riels per year).

To test the research hypothesis, a three-step multivariate analysis was conducted. First, the process of participation of each project was assessed by generically discussing its depth, breadth and timing. Correlation analyses were run among beneficiary contribution, participation, accountability-demanding ability and participation outcome to see if the depth of participation was effective/meaningful. Moreover, the quantity and backgrounds of the participants were examined to analyze the breadth of participation. Lastly, the stage when the beneficiaries started to get involved in the projects was considered for the timing of participation.

Second, multiple regression analyses were performed among mechanisms of beneficiary participation and accountability-demanding ability and participation outcome to see which participation mechanisms most influenced accountability-demanding ability and therefore participation

outcome of the beneficiaries.

Third, the beneficiary background variables were introduced as 'controls' in the multiple regression analyses among mechanisms of beneficiary participation and accountability-demanding ability and participation outcome to see how these control variables impacted on the associations between the independent and dependent variables.

6. Empirical Findings and Discussion

6.1. The Process of Participation

Tables 3a and 3b exhibit positive correlation coefficients among the levels of contribution, participation, accountability-demanding ability and participation outcome of each beneficiary sample. Also, the elements of participation (i.e., information sharing, consultation, joint assessment, shared decision making, collaboration and empowerment) and accountability-demanding ability (i.e., access to information, information analysis and placing demands, and elicitation of responses) were positively

Table 3a: Correlations among Levels of Beneficiary Contribution, Participation, Accountability-Demanding Ability and Participation Outcome (KAWP: n=32)

Variables	1	2	2.1	2.2	2.3	2.4	2.5	2.6	3	3.1	3.2	3.3	4
1. Contribution	-												
2. Participation	**.45****	-											
2.1. Information sharing	.32*	.58**	-										
2.2. Consultation	.55**	.80**	.60**	-									
2.3. Joint assessment	.46**	.81**	.36*	.65**	-								
2.4. Shared decision making	.76**	.81**	.31*	.46**	.76**	-							
2.5. Collaboration	.36*	.53**	.31*	.31*	.49**	.69**	-						
2.6. Empowerment	.37*	.65**	.56**	.34*	.37*	.37*	.53**	-					
3. Accountability-demanding ability	**.51****	**.37***	.46**	.51**	.30*	.68**	.55**	.74**	-				
3.1. Access to information	.45**	.34*	.32*	.32*	.29*	.29*	.30*	.35*	.74**	-			
3.2. Information analysis & placing demands	.40*	.37*	.37*	.37*	.30*	.39*	.44**	.30*	.66**	.40*	-		
3.3. Elicitation of responses	.55**	.32*	.32*	.32*	.55**	.30*	.39*	.42**	.68**	.40*	.52**	-	
4. Participation outcome	**.40***	**.66****	.46**	.38*	.56**	.45**	.57**	.58**	**.66****	.31*	.45**	.68**	-

Note: *: p<.05; **: p<.01 (one-tailed test)

Table 3b: Correlations among Levels of Beneficiary Contribution, Participation, Accountability-Demanding Ability and Participation Outcome (AS: n=43)

Variables	1	2	2.1	2.2	2.3	2.4	2.5	2.6	3	3.1	3.2	3.3	4
1. Contribution	-												
2. Participation	**.55****	-											
2.1. Information sharing	.44**	.81**	-										
2.2. Consultation	.56**	.79**	.66**	-									
2.3. Joint assessment	.25*	.71**	.41**	.31*	-								
2.4. Shared decision making	.42**	.75**	.35*	.46**	.69**	-							
2.5. Collaboration	.45**	.84**	.56**	.54**	.61**	.75**	-						
2.6. Empowerment	.50**	.86**	.77**	.75**	.44**	.47**	.63**	-					
3. Accountability-demanding ability	**.46****	**.73****	.60**	.53**	.43**	.53**	.68**	.75**	-				
3.1. Access to information	.30*	.75**	.43**	.55**	.57**	.64**	.71**	.75**	.81**	-			
3.2.Information analysis & placing demands	.40**	.70**	.54**	.50**	.49**	.54**	.63**	.69**	.86**	.74**	-		
3.3. Elicitation of responses	.50**	.62**	.62**	.49**	.27*	.33*	.53**	.67**	.87**	.58**	.63**	-	
4. Participation outcome	**.42****	**.59****	.47**	.41**	.44*	.58**	.50**	.60**	**.59****	.57**	.50**	.56**	-

Note: *: p<.05; **: p<.01 (one-tailed test)

associated with all the variables in both cases.

The positive correlation results among the beneficiary contribution, participation, accountability-demanding ability and participation outcome prove that the depth of each participation mechanism was effective/meaningful in relation to the accountability-demanding ability. The results conceptually imply that the more the beneficiaries contributed to the projects, the deeper or more 'meaningfully' they participated, the more they were able to demand the NGOs to respond to their needs and interests, and the more they were willing to partake and the better they benefited from the projects.

Owing to the project managers interviewed, the entire beneficiary populations participated in the projects. Furthermore, since both projects targeted the marginalized and disadvantaged (i.e., the very poor) and the majority of the participants were women, it is assumed that any possible case of elite control and influence and gender bias among the beneficiaries was minimized; although their extents of participation and accountability-demanding ability differed across the cases. It is hence concluded that both beneficiary populations broadly participated in the projects; that is to say, the breadth of participation was considerably large. Finally, all the interviewed beneficiaries reported taking part in the projects from the outset (i.e., since the identification phase).

The overall synthesis of the depth, breadth and timing of beneficiary participation discussed above contends that the process of participation in each observation was generally meaningful. We will thereafter look at what tends to determine accountability-demanding ability of the beneficiaries in such a process.

6.2. What Determines Accountability-Demanding Ability of Beneficiaries?

6.2.1. Mechanisms of Participation

Results of the multiple regression analyses among mechanisms of beneficiary participation and accountability-demanding ability and participation outcome provided in Table 4 vary across the cases. In the case of *KAWP*, consultation (β =.85, $p<.05$), shared decision making (β =.91, $p<.01$) and empowerment (β =.75, $p<.01$) stood out to be the dominant determinants of the accountability-

Table 4: Regression Analyses among Mechanisms of Beneficiary Participation and Accountability-Demanding Ability and Participation Outcome

Independent Variables	Dependent Variables (KAWP: n=32)				Dependent Variables (AS: n=43)			
Mechanisms of Participation	Accountability Demanding Ability		Participation Outcome		Accountability Demanding Ability		Participation Outcome	
	β	t	β	t	β	t	β	t
1. Information sharing	-.37	-1.37	-.13	-.23	.04	.23	.09	.93
2. Consultation	.85	2.78*	-.30	-.15	-.15	-.96	-.19	-.66
3. Joint assessment	-.31	-.76	.16	.91	-.06	-.43	-.04	-.83
4. Shared decision making	.91	2.83**	.13	.56	.10	.55	.31	1.77*
5. Collaboration	.11	.47	.46	1.94*	.31	1.77*	.18	.59
6. Empowerment	.75	3.85**	.63	2.99**	.61	3.24**	.56	2.32*
Adjusted R^2	.71		.88		.58		.50	

Note: *: p<.05; **: p<.01

demanding ability (adjusted R^2 = .71); while merely collaboration (β =.31, $p<.05$) and empowerment (β =.61, $p<.01$) were the prominent ones in the *AS* analysis (adjusted R^2 = .58). As per the participation outcome, collaboration (β = .46, $p<.05$) and empowerment (β = .63, $p<.01$) turned out to be the most influencing attributes in the *KAWP* analysis (adjusted R^2 = .88); while in the case of *AS*, shared decision making (β =.31, $p<.05$) and empowerment (β =.56, $p<.05$) had the greatest impacts (adjusted R^2 = .50).

However, following the entrance of the beneficiary characteristics as control variables into the analyses, the results became slightly distinct in terms of determinants and statistical values. As displayed in Tables 5a and 5b, no instrumental mechanisms of participation significantly affected the accountability-demanding ability and participation outcome respectively in both cases. In *KAWP*, the mechanisms depicting significant and positive impacts on the accountability-demanding ability (adjusted R^2 = .68) were shared decision-making (β = .67, $p<.05$) and empowerment (β = .48, $p<.05$), and those on the participation outcome (adjusted R^2 = .73) were collaboration (β = .36, $p<.05$) and empowerment (β = .45, $p<.05$). With respect to *AS*, only empowerment (β = .45, $p<.01$ and β = .44, $p<.05$ respectively) had strong effects on the accountability-demanding ability (adjusted R^2 = .52) and participation outcome (adjusted R^2 = .43).

Based on the regression exercises, both before and after controlling the beneficiary characteristics, it is observed that despite some inconsistency in the overall results the transformative mechanisms of participation (i.e., shared decision making, collaboration and empowerment) appeared to the most extent determining the accountability-demanding ability and participation outcome of the beneficiaries. This does not mean, nevertheless, the instrumental mechanisms (i.e., information sharing, consultation and joint assessment) did not at all influence the accountability-demanding ability and participation outcome. As the correlation results in Tables 3a and 3b indicated, there existed significant relationships between these mechanisms and the 'ability' and 'outcome' variables. The regression results somehow suggest better impacts of the transformative mechanisms on the accountability-demanding ability and participation outcome.

6.2.2. Beneficiary Characteristics

Among the beneficiary characteristics, the variables showing consistency in both sign and significance of coefficients appeared to be 'age of participant' and 'organizational affiliation' (see Tables 5a and 5b). Independently, these two variables pivotally determined some mechanisms of participation, the accountability-demanding ability and participation outcome; even though 'age of participant' failed to contribute to sufficiently explaining the accountability-demanding ability and participation outcome in the *AS* case. Once included with the mechanisms of participation in the 'control' analyses, the two variables still significantly influenced the accountability-demanding ability and participation outcome; except for the accountability-demanding ability in the *AS* analysis of

Table 5a: Regression Analyses among Mechanisms of Beneficiary Participation and Accountability-Demanding Ability and Participation Outcome with Background‘ Controls ’(KAWP: n=32)

	Mechanisms of Participation												Dependent Variables				Dependent Variables[a]			
	Information Sharing		Consultation		Joint Assessment		Shared Decision Making		Collaboration		Empowerment		Accountability Demanding Ability		Participation Outcome		Accountability Demanding Ability		Participation Outcome	
Beneficiary Characteristics	β	t	β	t	β	t	β	t	β	t	β	t	β	t	β	t	β	t	β	t
Age of participant	.26	2.02*	.12	.66	.22	1.25	.47	2.50*	.31	1.68	.36	2.20*	.34	2.35*	.41	2.25*	.83	4.46**	.41	2.38*
No. of children living with	-.02	-.21	-.08	-.45	.05	.30	-.05	-.31	.42	2.16*	.07	.44	.07	.32	.24	1.27	.01	.25	.11	1.07
Education	-.03	-.25	.03	.19	-.16	-.87	.07	.39	.16	.81	.12	.77	.24	1.59	.25	1.26	.18	1.04	.22	1.64
Organizational affiliation	.75	4.59**	.21	1.10	.31	1.67	.46	2.05*	.35	1.78*	.31	1.76*	.32	2.23*	.54	3.07**	.38	2.54*	.32	2.22*
Farming land	.22	1.59	.00	.01	-.03	-.17	-.20	-1.04	-.07	-.40	-.08	-.47	.16	1.06	-.08	-.39	.05	.37	-.10	-.77
No. of livestock	.06	.41	.15	.72	.04	.21	.04	.17	-.04	-.20	.31	1.56	.20	1.37	.07	.32	.38	1.61	.11	1.08
No. of materials	.11	.78	-.16	-.83	-.15	-.81	-.18	-.93	-.10	-.56	-.04	-.27	-.14	-.89	.00	.02	-.09	-1.03	.13	.56
Average annual income	.09	.68	-.03	-.25	-.31	-1.41	-.08	-.34	.30	1.32	-.24	-1.18	.06	.32	-.22	-.95	.07	.47	-.31	-1.64
Adjusted R^2 (1)	.54		.12		.17		.38		.33		.28		.44		.47		(NA)			
Mechanisms of Participation																				
1. Information sharing																	-.12	-1.10	-.15	-1.09
2. Consultation																	.22	1.04	-.07	-.54
3. Joint assessment																	-.17	-.59	.13	.56
4. Shared decision making	(NA)												(NA)				.67	2.55*	.30	1.60
5. Collaboration																	.12	.60	.36	2.05*
6. Empowerment																	.48	1.75*	.45	2.22*
Adjusted R^2 (2)																	.68		.73	

Note: *: p<.05; **: p<.01; a: Once the beneficiary characteristics included as ‘controls’.

Table 5b: Regression Analyses among Mechanisms of Beneficiary Participation and Accountability-Demanding Ability and Participation Outcome with Background ‘Controls’ (AS: n=43)

	Mechanisms of Participation												Dependent Variables				Dependent Variables[a]			
	Information Sharing		Consultation		Joint Assessment		Shared Decision Making		Collaboration		Empowerment		Accountability Demanding Ability		Participation Outcome		Accountability Demanding Ability		Participation Outcome	
Beneficiary Characteristics	β	t	β	t	β	t	β	t	β	t	β	t	β	t	β	t	β	t	β	t
Age of participant	.19	1.04	.27	1.52	.41	2.85**	.31	2.16*	.46	3.51**	.32	1.71*	.22	1.45	.27	1.54	.65	2.87**	.64	2.78*
No. of children living with	-.06	-.34	-.13	-.74	-.11	-.89	-.11	-.73	-.09	-.66	-.06	-.38	-.05	-.38	.02	.13	-.06	-.59	.03	.25
Education	.13	.77	.11	.59	.01	.11	.02	.16	.00	.05	.14	.80	.02	.14	-.06	-.41	.15	1.30	-.15	-1.19
Organizational affiliation	.25	1.29	.24	1.34	.39	2.83**	.35	2.03*	.26	1.66	.19	1.13	.41	2.53*	.36	2.27*	.21	1.33	.66	4.52**
Farming land	.00	.05	.07	.43	.17	1.41	-.17	-1.13	.00	.04	-.02	-.14	.18	1.30	.06	.42	.12	.93	.02	.13
No. of livestock	.10	.62	-.09	-.45	-.20	-1.63	-.07	-.52	.09	.67	.01	.07	.16	1.11	.07	.46	.13	1.20	.07	.55
No. of materials	-.08	-.45	.09	.51	-.16	-1.34	.19	1.13	.19	1.28	.08	.46	-.02	-.13	.14	.82	-.06	-.47	.00	.02
Average annual income	-.12	-.72	.05	.30	.03	.25	-.06	-.41	.00	.01	-.00	-.05	-.06	-.46	-.23	-1.44	.04	.39	-.20	-1.59
Adjusted R^2 (1)	.18		.14		.44		.21		.32		.21		.27		.32		(NA)			
Mechanisms of Participation																				
1. Information sharing																	.07	.38	.15	.76
2. Consultation																	-.04	-.22	-.11	-.54
3. Joint assessment																	-.14	-.81	-.20	-.98
4. Shared decision making	(NA)												(NA)				.18	.81	.24	1.15
5. Collaboration																	.21	1.33	.07	.28
6. Empowerment																	.45	2.87**	.44	1.76*
Adjusted R^2 (2)																	.52		.43	

Note: *: p<.05; **: p<.01; a: Once the beneficiary characteristics included as ‘controls’.

'organizational affiliation'. It is also noteworthy that 'number of children living with' positively attributed to 'collaboration' in the *KAWP* analysis, but not to other variables in the same and other cases.

The determination of 'age of participant' on some mechanisms of participation, the accountability-demanding ability and participation outcome denotes that older beneficiaries were likely to exert more powerful demands in the participation process than younger ones. This could be explained by the hierarchical culture of Cambodian communities in which tribute for seniority is profoundly rooted[11]. This culture-embedded aspect is explicitly evident in current development work where agencies usually seek advisement from 'respected elders'[12] in villages throughout the process. The two organizations in question took this cultural advantage by utilizing these people (among such other key figures as village chiefs, village development committee members, and monks) to identify the beneficiaries and their needs (see Sections 1.1, 2.1 & 2.2 in Appendix 1). This might have become a benefit for them to articulate and demand to maintain their interests in the projects. Observations in the meetings and training sessions during the fieldwork encountered several hierarchical situations where 'senior' participants were privileged to express ideas, make suggestions and deliver solutions. The advantage garnered from the general respect for these elders could have placed them in a favorable position to influence and decide things in the participation process and thus better profit from the projects.

The criticality of 'organizational affiliation' prevailed in the analyses decides that beneficiaries, or at least their family members, consuming engagement in groups or external networks seemed to stand more ably and beneficially in the participation process compared to those non-aligned. This stronger probability of the affiliated is also reflected by the higher values of adjusted R^2 in all analyses of *KAWP* matched with those of *AS*. The greaterness indicates that the whole explanatory value of the variables entered in the analyses is better for *KAWP* than for *AS*. In other words, in terms of statistical parameters the beneficiaries of *KAWP*, who were organized into groups, appeared to be more capable and demanding than those of *AS*, who were not. It means expressing 'voice' through collective groups could be more effective than doing it individually.

This finding suggests that social capital, measured by linkages structured in organized cohorts or family lineages, casts a significant effect on the accountability-demanding ability of beneficiaries in the participation process. It is possibly because being related to groups or family members connected with groups could provide a better access to information and practical assistance relevant to the projects.[13] More information may lead to a better judgment and decision as regards own needs and interests. This may be reflected by the self-consciousness and self-determination of own needs and interests (in addition to sense of ownership) illustrated by beneficiaries who were able to demand them responded[14] (see Section 1.2 in Appendix 1). Plus, perhaps organizational membership experience could derive better skills of bargaining in the participation process and subsequently a better standing to benefit

from the projects.

The positive attribution of 'number of children living with' to 'collaboration' in the KAWP analysis indicates that the ability to collaborate in the project implementation was higher when the number of children within a household was larger. This was probably thanks to available labor force in the family. However, this characteristic had no effect on other variables in this and other analyses. It is therefore infeasible to deduce that number of children per household could impact the accountability-demanding ability and participation outcome.

It is worth noting that 'education' produced mixed and non-significant results in the analyses. Education should have enabled awareness and willingness to search and analyze information[15]. But the variation in education degrees among the beneficiaries of these two projects seemed slight. Very few of them would finish beyond primary schooling (see Table 1 in Appendix 2). Furthermore, the fundamental ways of communicating information in these projects were through village meetings and home visits frequented by the NGO staff and volunteers (Based on the project managers interviews "see Section 2.3 in Appendix 1" and beneficiary responses to Question 3.1.3). These features may have contributed to the non-significance of 'education' in the analyses.

As well, no categorical variable of wealth consistently and significantly correlated with other components. This might mirror the very nature of both project cases which targeted the poor. As unveiled in Table 2 in Appendix 2, the items most devoted by the participants to the projects were time, information and labor; whereas material and money were least contributed. Any economic assets they happened to possess were relatively trivial. For instance, an average farmland size of an owner was just 1.75 Rai (or 0.29 ha) and 2.39 Rai (or 0.39 ha) respectively for *KAWP* and *AS* (see Table 1 in Appendix 2). It is thus surmised that wealth did not factor in the participation process of these individual projects.

7. Conclusions

Development NGOs have been called for more program accountability, interpreted as better indicating and gratifying needs and interests of intended constituencies. This article has attempted to explore the role of beneficiary participation in influencing NGOs in this regard, by identifying factors which affect ability of beneficiaries performed in this quest. Although definitive conclusions cannot be drawn completely from the empirical results and anecdotal evidence, a number of central themes emerge from the study which merit insightful reflection.

Above all, this study proves that beneficiaries, who are the ultimate base of NGO legitimacy, are able to hold NGOs accountable in terms of responding to their real needs and interests. It is explicit from the empirical analyses that there is indeed a significant and positive association between beneficiary participation and accountability. Their ability seems to be determined by a 'meaningful' participation process which emphasizes their early inclusion (i.e., from the identification phase) and

'broad' involvement, and which most of all provides greater essence to 'transformative' mechanisms (i.e., shared decision making, collaboration and empowerment).

That is to say, for their 'voice' to be heard and taken into account beneficiaries need to get involved from the inception of the project cycle; as in commencing stages various aspects of an intended project, including goals, objectives and anticipated impact, are developed and assessed. Moreover, participation must be non-selective. A maximum quantity, if not the entirety, of beneficiaries should be included in the process, assuming questions of elite advantage or better-off articulation are to be evicted. Of farthest importance, provided the depth of participation tends to render better efficacy, beneficiaries should be able to make decisions, hold principal roles and responsibilities, and develop and manage own initiatives throughout the project. Provision of information and mere consultation are inadequate to generate sincere ownership and commitment by beneficiaries, the critical attributes to the triumph of the project in satisfying their needs and interests[16].

Further to the 'meaningful' participation process afore-elaborated, two determining beneficiary characteristics are worth unraveling. First, it appears that due to cultural hierarchy in the Cambodian setting seniority may count in the participation process. Elder participants are likely to be more influential and demanding for they are traditionally more consulted and granted opportunities to utter 'voice'. This reflects the prime role of orthodox culture played in grassroots development[17].

Second, social capital, defined in terms of organizational linkages or lineages with family members attached to organizations, also reveals the pivot in the participation process. Individuals with such affiliations are probable to enjoy better ability and outcome because of more accessibility to information and practical aid, and better bargaining skills. This finding offers a farther insight into the determination of social capital on participation (e.g., Weinberger & Jutting, 2001; Meinzen-Dick, Raju & Gulati, 2002)[18]. Moreover, in the Cambodian context this finding lends a related corroboration to Yonekura's study (2000) which underlines that donors concerned with community organizing are more likely to establish a relationship that entrenches beneficiary accountability than those just granting project-based assistance.

Hence, for an implication, given the above facts that the generally respected elderly entertain such cultural privileges and that the affiliated possess such organizational advantages, boosting caliber of these two categories of locals maybe culminates in a beneficial effect on NGOs' program accountability. This is feasible in a sense that the relatively better articulate could speak for the passive, voiceless or less articulate (or assist them to 'voice'), thereby levering the process of meaningful participation[19]. Yet, a possibility that these figures could be 'neo-elite' whose needs and interests deplete those of the others cannot be ruled out. This implies extra caution in attempts to foster such ability.

As concluding remarks, providing any participation ever entails effectiveness or meaningfulness, it

should be (in a nutshell) timely, non-selective and transformative. More widely implicated, to the extent that grassroots investment and involvement is central to social, political and economic development which affects the truly poor, their effective/meaningful participation is convincingly a focal point in warranting such development. Therefore, whether NGOs, and holistically the development community, are to maintain their legitimacy/relevance in this respect is reliant on their commitment to bolstering this typology of beneficiary participation. Ultimately, policy efforts to accelerate the likelihood of NGOs' downward accountability should take vigilant note of culture-oriented repertoires (e.g., seniority in this work) and any stock of social capital present in project localities, since these aspects could influentially render such potential.

This study somehow, as it stands, constitutes significant limitations and delimitations. First of all, even though the research centered on development-oriented NGOs, it should amount to embedding into the findings deliberations of heterogeneity within the NGO sector as well as among beneficiaries. Still, difficulties in gaining access to more projects and organizations made it impossible to cover a larger sample which would have allowed more strenuous statistical analyses. Examining merely two projects and two organizations thus could provide limited generalizability. Additionally, most of the data are self-reported perceptions of the direct beneficiaries of the projects, and they were all gathered at one time in the implementation phase. Although a number of observations on project sites and interactions between the NGOs and beneficiaries (such as in meetings and training sessions) were made, it was insatiable to back up the beneficiary responses with the field observations. The rigor of the study, however, underlies in the empirical results evincive of the strong relationships among the variables examined, at least from the standpoints of the direct beneficiaries. Any replicable lessons must ergo be drawn within the organizational, project and methodological ramifications presented.

Finally, as the chief scope of this study covered the beneficiary role vis-à-vis the NGOs in the participation process, it delimited to exploring other possible factors which could have attributed to the accountability-demanding ability of the beneficiaries. Such factors may rest with the external environment of the NGOs, such as their funding donors, other entities operating in the project areas, and local actors (e.g., village authorities and village development committees). Even though attempts were made to look into probable impacts of the cases' external environment, the data derived were inadequate to make any conclusive analysis. This paucity is therefore worthwhile for additional investigations.

NOTES

1. For an empirical analysis on capacity building of Cambodian development-focused NGOs, see Ngin (2002).
2. The term 'beneficiaries' here encapsulates those who benefit or are targeted to benefit from development programs. Alternatives include constituencies, stakeholders, clients/clientele, target groups/communities, participants, etc. They are usually poor, marginalized or disadvantaged in one or another sense. Their sub-

stance or role is often viewed as being 'passive' or 'active' recipients (i.e., 'objects' or 'subjects' of development endeavors). This concept will be additionally contemplated in the following sections.

3. Nevertheless, in a rare setting like Bangladesh where NGOs seem abundant, beneficiary 'exit' is possible; particularly once NGOs compete for acquisition of participants. I am grateful to an anonymous reviewer for pointing out this distinction.
4. We herewith assume that beneficiary characteristics impact on levels of participation and consequently on accountability-demanding ability. Also, beneficiary characteristics may shape the breadth of participation.
5. The fieldwork was undertaken between August and September 2002.
6. Content analysis is done by applying pattern-matching method which consists of establishing linkages between varying pieces of information to some common concept.
7. For details on organizational and program characteristics of Cambodian NGOs, see Ngin (2001).
8. The project managers were interviewed in their offices while the beneficiary interviews were done individually in the field, either at their homes or at community centers.
9. Virtually all beneficiary interviews were jotted down manually, as this was conductive to a casual environment where the interviewees felt more eased and freer in responding.
10. 'Sex','marital status','occupation' and'main source of income' were excluded from analysis, since the response data of these variables were not normally distributed in both cases. The overwhelming majority of respondents were female, married and widowed. Rather than being regular farmers, most of the respondents spread to be among those who grew vegetables and fruit trees, raised domestic animals, sold labor in farming, or had other secondary jobs. Their income thus was derived from such work, not from farming.
11. Cambodian culture contains various traditions which encourage moral behavior of youngers towards olders. These traditions comprise laws, customs, local precedents, folklore, literature and religious texts, that educate youngers to pay respect to olders. This traditional hierarchy might connote negativism in certain settings. To exemplify, it is traditionally considered improper or impolite for a child to argue with a parent or for a student to argue with a teacher. This would discourage exchange of ideas or critical discussions between the lower and the upper.
12. The elderly, presumed to possess strong personality, sound judgment and fair-mindedness, are accorded particular prestige and homage among average villagers. Village problems are always referred to them for consultation and settlement. This community norm is still largely practiced in Cambodian rural society despite decades of conflict, capitalist economic penetration and democratization process undergone in the country. For details, see Hughes (2001).
13. Since the two NGOs were also implementing other projects (such as credit/saving, cow/rice banks) in the target villages, those affiliated, through either groups or family clans, could be advantageous in a sense of being more accessible to the organizations.
14. Analogously, Weinberger (2000) discovers that both knowledge and recognition of own needs and interests are major determinants of participation, which are induced by cultural and societal structures (a scope

beyond this study).

15. However, the value of education is doubtable in relation to participation. For instance, Buch (1999), as cited in Agarwal (2001), observes that illiteracy per se is not an obstruction to women representatives being effective leaders of village councils in India.
16. The vitality of ownership in this sense is precisely demonstrated in the responses of beneficiaries who were able to demand their needs and interests met (see Section 1.2 in Appendix 1).
17. For example, Agarwal (2001) evinces a number of culture-influenced norms and perceptions (e.g., "gender segregation of public space", "gender division of labor", "gendered behavior norms") that impede South Asian women's participation in community forest groups. To cite one, widows or older married women residing in their parental homes, who advantage from freer mobility, louder speech and assumption of "the posture of local leaders", are more active and possess better bargaining power (Agarwal, 2001 quoting Britt, 1993 & Narain, 1994).
18. Weinberger & Jutting (2001) find that memberships in informal groups importantly inspire motivation and decision to partake in local development organizations. Meinzen-Dick, Raju & Gulati (2002) unveil that areas harboring temples or religious institutions are more receptive to formulation of irrigation organizations.
19. I am indebted to an anonymous referee for altering me to this point.

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APPENDIX 1

1. Content Analyses of Beneficiary Open-Ended Responses

Two main open-ended questions pertaining how the beneficiaries got involved in the projects and why they were able or unable to demand their needs responded were asked during the beneficiary interviews. The first question was to understand the nature of beneficiary participation and the second one was to investigate the reasons behind the accountability-demanding ability of the beneficiaries.

1.1. How Project Beneficiaries Got Involved

A common pattern of involvement could be concluded from the cross-case content analyses of the beneficiary responses. The process of involvement consisted of three significant phases. First, the villagers/would-be beneficiaries attended a meeting in their village called by the NGO with cooperation and coordination from key village people (i.e., the village chief, VDC members or well-respected seniors). In the meeting, the villagers were informed of the intended project and asked about their interests of joining the project. Then, they were got identified as beneficiaries after they had decided to participate in the project. The final phase of the process involved direct participation of the beneficiaries in the project. (In the case of *KAWP*, as indicated in the project characteristics, the beneficiaries were organized into a small group in each village. However, their participation was direct in spite of the representative form of their organizing).

1.2. Why Project Beneficiaries were Able to Demand their Needs Responded

Despite difficulties in categorizing various responses, two critical reasons could be drawn from the participants of the two cases who were able to demand the NGOs to respond to their needs and interests. They were:

- *Self-consciousness*: Those who were demanding seemed self-conscious about their own needs and self-determined with what they wanted the NGOs to help. A representative quotation indicative of this self-consciousness and self-determination of own needs could be one from a beneficiary of *AS*: "The NGO must respond to our needs because we are poor ourselves; so we know clearly what we need today and tomorrow, what we eat today and what we will eat tomorrow. Therefore, if the NGO really wants to help us, they must help us with what we want..."
- *Sense of ownership*: Another reason was a sense of ownership towards the projects emerging among those able beneficiaries. They felt the projects belonged to them and thus they had the right to benefiting from the projects that must have fulfilled their aspired needs. As a beneficiary of *KAWP* articulated, "...The NGO said from the beginning that this project belongs to us, the poor villagers. They said that they help us to help ourselves; so why not meeting our needs when we

request them for help?...We benefit from this project, so the NGO must respond to our needs."

2. Content Analyses of Project Managers Interviews

This section deals with three important issues among others asked in the project managers interviews: how the beneficiaries were identified, how the beneficiary needs were identified, and NGO-beneficiary interaction.

2.1. How Project Beneficiaries were Identified

A process-oriented approach incorporating three stages was applied by the two NGOs to identify the beneficiaries. The initial stage, called "look and listen", was a village familiarization process which concerned participant observation on villagers' daily lives, their existing coping mechanisms, community dynamics, and power structures. The emphasis of this phase was on garnering knowledge of village life and building up relationships of trust with community components. In this immersion period, which lasted between two and four months, home visits were conducted to learn how the villagers thought of and acted on their issues raised during discussion among themselves, with encouragement from the NGOs.

In the wake of a significant degree of trust developed among the NGO staff and the villagers, 'wealth ranking' exercises were undertaken utilizing key figures such as village heads, VDC members, teachers, monks and elderly people. In this second stage, poverty was perceived and measured by the villagers themselves based on their own criteria for defining their wealth categories. The findings of these exercises were used to demographically map participation in ongoing development projects and in many cases explicitly depicted that the beneficiaries had either dropped out of these activities or had never joined in the first place (particularly in the case of *KAWP*).

Based on the findings of the wealth ranking exercises and on intuitive assessments, the interested beneficiaries were selected. In some cases, the participants were self-choosing; and occasionally, they were picked up through a draw or lottery system (in the case of *KAWP*). In this final phase, the opted beneficiaries of *KAWP* were formed into a small group of average five members, called 'an association for the very poor', in each village for facilitating participation in the project.

2.2. How Beneficiary Needs were Identified

The process of needs definition was the core in the NGO-beneficiary relationships of both cases. This process went through three phases: individual home interview, group meeting and needs identification. First, house-to-house interviews were conducted with each beneficiary to elicit and comprehend their individual concerns and problems (and their possible remedial solutions as well). After the individual interviews were completed, which took a couple of months (dependent on time and staff availability of each organization), a group meeting was held in each target village, with

attendance of key village people (i.e., the village chief, VDC members or well-respected seniors). In the meetings, the beneficiaries discussed, selected and prioritized the individual issues. Finally, the participants grouped and agreed to common needs and interests aroused in the meetings. (The projects were hence supposed to be designed in response to their commonly expressed needs and interests.)

2.3. NGO-Beneficiary Interaction Approaches

Approaches for involving (or relating with) the beneficiaries in the projects most applied by the two organizations were home visit, meeting, training and study tour. These were prominent mechanisms in the NGO-beneficiary interaction in the two project cases. Home visits, as mentioned above, were conducted during the early stages of the projects to identify the beneficiaries and their respective needs. Meetings were most frequently held in-village but at times outside-village (i.e., in another village or at the NGO office). Main purposes of the meetings were to inform the beneficiaries of the project progress, discuss difficulties, solve emerging problems, and make decisions on issues related to the projects. Trainings (i.e., in agriculture and/or community development) were undertaken throughout the projects in addition to provision of needed materials to the beneficiaries. Also, the beneficiaries occasionally attended study tours organized by the NGOs to exchange experiences and learn from other villages.

APPENDIX 2

Table 1: Selected Characteristics of Project Beneficiary Interviewees

NGOs	Age		Marital Status			Educational Background				Org. Affiliation[b]		Farm Land	
	≦45	45+	Single	Married	Widowed	No	Primary	Junior	Others[a]	No	Yes	No	Yes[c]
KAWP	18	14	0	22	10	8	16	2	6	16	16	18	14
(n=32)	(56.30)	(43.70)	(0.00)	(68.80)	(31.30)	(25.00)	(50.00)	(6.30)	(18.80)	(50.00)	(50.00)	(56.30)	(43.70)
AS	17	26	3	25	15	11	20	3	9	20	23	15	28
(n=43)	(39.53)	(60.47)	(7.00)	(58.10)	(34.90)	(25.60)	(46.50)	(7.00)	(20.90)	(46.51)	(53.49)	(34.90)	(65.10)
Total	35	40	3	47	25	19	36	5	15	36	39	33	42
(n=75)	(46.66)	(53.34)	(4.00)	(62.66)	(33.34)	(25.34)	(48.00)	(6.66)	(20.00)	(48.00)	(52.00)	(44.00)	(56.00)

Note: Numbers in brackets stand for percentages of the respective sample.

a: Others include those with non-formal education experience, such as literacy classes.

b: For *KAWP* participants, organizational affiliation meant they or their family members belonged or belong to groups other than their own associations.

c: An average farmland size of an owner is 1.75 Rai (or 0.29 ha) and 2.39 Rai (or 0.39 ha) respectively for *KAWP* and *AS*. A rai is roughly one-sixth hectare.

Table 2: Levels of Beneficiary Contribution, Participation, Accountability-Demanding Ability and Participation Outcome

Variables	KAWP (n=32)		AS (n=43)		Cross-Case (n=75)	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
1. Contribution	**2.91**	**.43**	**3.34**	**.59**	**3.16**	**.56**
1.1. Information	4.18	.47	4.06	.59	4.12	.54
1.2. Labor	4.15	.62	3.83	.78	3.97	.73
1.3. Material	1.25	1.13	2.72	.82	2.09	1.21
1.4. Time	4.31	.53	4.20	.70	4.25	.63
1.5. Money	.59	.75	1.76	1.15	1.26	1.15
2. Participation	**3.55**	**.42**	**3.43**	**.53**	**3.48**	**.49**
2.1. Information sharing	4.18	.69	4.20	.77	4.20	.73
2.2. Consultation	3.96	.78	4.09	.75	4.04	.76
2.3. Joint assessment	3.25	.52	3.00	.70	3.10	.64
2.4. Shared decision making	2.87	.53	2.42	.52	2.61	.56
2.5. Collaboration	3.40	.65	3.23	.62	3.30	.63
2.6. Empowerment	3.70	.43	3.68	.64	3.69	.56
3. Accountability-demanding ability	**3.03**	**.61**	**3.01**	**.60**	**3.02**	**.60**
3.1. Access to information	2.75	.49	2.69	.64	2.72	.58
3.2. Information analysis & placing demands	3.04	.46	2.97	.57	3.00	.52
3.3. Elicitation of responses	3.50	.56	3.37	.87	3.42	.75
4. Participation outcome	**4.14**	**.51**	**3.81**	**.67**	**3.95**	**.63**
4.1. Awareness of participation rights and roles	4.06	.56	3.34	.75	3.65	.76
4.2. Project ownership and commitment	4.46	.56	4.09	.60	4.25	.61
4.3. Needs and interests satisfaction	3.90	.89	3.95	.92	3.93	.90

Note: Values indicate average scores of variables measured by the 6-point scale ranging from 0 to 5.

APPENDIX 3: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR PROJECT BENEFICIARIES

Date of interview:___/___/2002 Project No.:_____ Interviewee No.:_____

I. Beneficiary Background

1.1. Personal Information

1.1.1. Age:___years old

1.1.2. Sex: ☐ Male [1] ☐ Female [2]

1.1.3. Marital status: ☐ Single [1] ☐ Married [2] ☐ Widowed [3]

☐ No. of children living with:_____

1.1.4. What is your occupation?

☐ Farmer [1] ☐ Fisherman [2] ☐ Civil servant [3]

☐ Sales person [4] ☐ Others:_____ [5]

1.1.5. What is your educational background?

☐ No school experience [1] ☐ Primary school [2]

☐ Lower secondary school [3] ☐ Upper secondary school [4]

☐ Others :_____ [5]

1.2. Organizational Affiliation

1.2.1. Do/did you or does/did someone in your family belong to any group, organization or association?

☐ No [1] ☐ Yes [2]

No.	1.2.1.1. Name of Organization	1.2.1.2. When?	1.2.1.3. Who in your family belongs to it?	1.2.1.4. Position
1		☐ Past [1] ☐ Now [2]	Who:_____ Age:_____	☐ Chair [1] ☐ Vice-chair [2] ☐ Member [3] ☐ Others:____[4]
2		☐ Past [1] ☐ Now [2]	Who:_____ Age:_____	☐ Chair [1] ☐ Vice-chair [2] ☐ Member [3] ☐ Others:____[4]
3		☐ Past [1] ☐ Now [2]	Who:_____ Age:_____	☐ Chair [1] ☐ Vice-chair [2] ☐ Member [3] ☐ Others:____[4]
4		☐ Past [1] ☐ Now [2]	Who:_____ Age:_____	☐ Chair [1] ☐ Vice-chair [2] ☐ Member [3] ☐ Others:____[4]
5		☐ Past [1] ☐ Now [2]	Who:_____ Age:_____	☐ Chair [1] ☐ Vice-chair [2] ☐ Member [3] ☐ Others:____[4]

1.3. Family Property

1.3.1. How large is the farming land your family owns? _____Rai

1.3.2. How many following livestock does your family own?

[ ] Pig [1] [ ] Chicken [2] [ ] Duck [3] [ ] Cow [4]

[ ] Buffalo [5] [ ] Others : _____ [6]

1.3.3. How many following things does your family own?

[ ] Motor bike [1] [ ] Bicycle [2] [ ] Rice mil [3]

[ ] Other machines : _____ [4]

1.4. Family Income

1.4.1. What is the main source of income of your family?

☐ Farming [1] ☐ Livestock [2] ☐ Fishing [3] ☐ Civil servant [4]

☐ Selling something [5] ☐ Others: _____ [6]

1.4.2. How much is the average annual income of your family? _____Riel/year

II. Beneficiary Participation

2.1. Forms of Participation

To what extent have you contributed the following items to the project?

0: Not at all 1: Very little 2: Little 3: Average 4: Much 5: Very much

Item	Level of Contribution
2.1.1. Information on the community (e.g. about local situations, problems, needs, etc.)	0 1 2 3 4 5
2.1.2. Labor (e.g. in building something, etc.)	0 1 2 3 4 5
2.1.3. Materials (e.g. land, rice, crops, etc.)	0 1 2 3 4 5
2.1.4. Time (e.g. in attending a meeting, presentation, seminar, etc.)	0 1 2 3 4 5
2.1.5. Money (e.g. for building something or buying any input for the project, etc.)	0 1 2 3 4 5

2.2. Timing of Participation

When did you get involved in the project? (Tick all applicable)

☐ Before the project started (i.e. before the implementation stage) [1] ([1] & [2] : [4])

☐ When the project started (i.e. during the implementation stage) [2] ([2] & [3] : [5])

☐ After the project ended (i.e. after the implementation stage) [3] ([1] & [3] : [6])

2.3. Nature of Participation

How did you get involved in the project?.....

2.4. Depth of Participation

Please evaluate the following statements based on the scaling below.
0: Not at all 1: Very little 2: Little 3: Average 4: Much 5: Very much

Statement	**Level of Contribution**
2.4.1. *Information-sharing:*	
You were informed by the NGO of all aspects related to the project.	0 1 2 3 4 5
2.4.2. *Consultation:*	
You were consulted by the NGO about the situations and reality of your community throughout the project.	0 1 2 3 4 5
2.4.3. *Joint assessment:*	
2.4.3.1. You were engaged by the NGO in identifying and analyzing problems of your community.	0 1 2 3 4 5
2.4.3.2. You were engaged by the NGO in assessing various aspects of the project before its implementation (such as its objectives, anticipated impact on your community, etc.)	0 1 2 3 4 5
2.4.4. *Shared decision-making:*	
2.4.4.1. You were actively involved in planning the project.	0 1 2 3 4 5
2.4.4.2. You were able to determine the priorities of the project.	0 1 2 3 4 5
2.4.4.3. You were able to determine your role(s) in the project.	0 1 2 3 4 5
2.4.4.4. You were able to share control and influence over allocation of resources used in the project.	0 1 2 3 4 5
2.4.4.5. You were able to make revisions and agreements on other issues related to the project.	0 1 2 3 4 5
2.4.5. *Collaboration:*	
2.4.5.1. You hold/held key role(s) in implementing the project.	0 1 2 3 4 5
2.4.5.2. You hold/held principal responsibility(ies) in implementing the project.	0 1 2 3 4 5
2.4.6. *Empowerment:*	
2.4.6.1. You were trained by the NGO to identify and analyze problems of your community.	0 1 2 3 4 5
2.4.6.2. You were trained by the NGO to develop and manage your own development initiatives.	0 1 2 3 4 5

III. Beneficiary Accountability-Demanding Ability

Please evaluate the following statements based on the scaling below.
0: Not at all 1: Very little 2: Little 3: Average 4: Much 5: Very much

Statement	**Level of Evaluation**
3.1. *Access to information:*	
3.1.1. You were able to obtain information relevant to the NGO's resources (e.g. its funding source(s), type(s) of funding, proportions of funds allocated in the project, etc.).	0 1 2 3 4 5
3.1.2. You were able to obtain information relevant to the NGO's activities (e.g. its mission, program areas, operation areas, on-going activities related to the project, etc.).	0 1 2 3 4 5
3.1.3. How did you get this information?	
.....	

3.2. *Information analysis and placing demands:*

3.2.1. You were able to understand and analyze the information on the NGO's resources and activities you obtained. 0 1 2 3 4 5

3.2.2. You were able to demand the NGO to explain and justify its actions when you found something wrong or suspicious in the information you obtained. 0 1 2 3 4 5

3.3. *Elicitation of responses:*

3.3.1. You were able to make the NGO respond to your demand(s) timely and accurately. 0 1 2 3 4 5

3.3.2. Why were/weren't you able to make the NGO respond to your demand(s)?

.....

.....

IV. Beneficiary Participation Outcome

Please evaluate the following statements based on the scaling below.

0: Not at all 1: Very little 2: Little 3: Average 4: Much 5: Very much

Statement	**Level of Evaluation**
4.1. You were aware of your right(s) and role(s) in partaking in the project.	0 1 2 3 4 5
4.2. You have/had commitment and ownership towards the project.	0 1 2 3 4 5
4.3. The project has responded to your need(s) and interest(s).	0 1 2 3 4 5

V. Final Comments

Did you encounter any difficulties/problems in participating in the project?

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Thank you for your invaluable time for the interview!