



People's Participation in Rural Development: The Examples From Mafikeng

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Abstract

The rural development strategy is very important to the predominantly rural Central District of the North-West Province of South Africa. However, most studies of rural development in Africa seem to indicate that the strategy is always 'top-down' and devoid of people's participation. The failure of this strategy to alleviate rural poverty is mostly predicated on this. This paper examines the prevalence of people's participation in all the stages of the rural development projects, in four rural areas in Mafikeng in the Central District. The information was collected through literature review and testing the theory (by use of questionnaires and interviews) on people's participation in the four rural areas. The central argument in this paper is that, though people's participation renders projects more effective and successful, the stages at which involvement can occur are varied. Examples of two very successful and two less successful projects in the district are cited to support the central argument. In conclusion, the study makes recommendations to the rural development agencies in the North-West to practise meaningful and realistic people's participation in their projects.

Introduction

Despite the advent of independence for most African countries in the last three decades, 'top-down' colonial development strategies (which see man as an object of development) still linger. As Stiefel and Wertheim (1983:2) puts it, "prevailing social, economic and political structures and relations in most Third World countries are hardly favourable to the participation of the poor majority in the definition and implementation of rural policies".

This implies that rural development planning is the preserve and prerogative of governments and its agents. Often, institutions which purport to foster people's participation are disparaging. All that is observable is the participation of the rural people in the implementation stage. Whether their participation in this stage is spontaneous, coerced or induced is still unanswered. Both the government and agencies (institutions) similarly

involved in rural development seem to assume the ability to guess correctly the needs and preferences of the rural poor. Hence, their projects and programmes for rural development do not seem to alleviate rural poverty. The problem is that these institutions do not foster people's participation in rural development as they purport.

These 'top-down' approaches to development have not borne fruit in rural development. There is still a crisis that characterises a lack of development in rural areas. This was clearly articulated by Machooka (1984:57) when he noted that:

Such strategies isolate rural populations from productive participation in the development of their areas and may be the major reason for the apparent socio-economic stagnation amongst the rural communities.

As a corollary, more recently, 'people's participation' has emerged as an alternative strategy for promoting rural development. Machooka (1984:57) holds that this has brought enthusiasm from the governments and international agencies to design development strategies that will involve the rural population in the process of development. The South African state, through the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP), also encourages people's participation in the decision-making, implementation, monitoring and distribution of benefits of rural development projects.

It is clear, therefore, that this latter strategy is a means of placing human resources in the (rural) development process. Abasiekong (1982:94) reckons that this strategy signifies that the community is placed as a high priority in development programmes. These views are expressed in Machooka (1984:60):

The concept of people's participation in rural development is generally accepted as a means of mobilising physical and human resources – all directed to increasing productivity and thus improving the living standard of the people.

However, the practicability of this strategy will be a wild dream if it cannot be institutionalised. Hence, a need for some devices such as: voluntary organizations and formal institutions to help foster people's participation in rural development.

In the new democratic South Africa, Rural Development projects would not be successfully implemented without the participation of the intended beneficiaries, the poor. The South African citizens are today more conscious and aware of their rights and constitutional provisions for democracy and transparency. Mindful of this, the Government and the RDP encourage rural development agencies to make means to ensure people's participation in the planning of development programmes and projects. The rural development agencies, therefore, are charged with providing germane conditions to the

participation of the target group as equal partners in decision-making, implementation, monitoring and distribution of benefits of rural development projects.

Using Mafikeng in the Central District of the North-West Province as the frame of reference, the prevalence or absence of people's participation in rural development in the North-West was investigated to:

- determine the extent of actual participation by the rural poor in rural development projects;
- determine the forms of participation in the rural North-West;
- determine the level of acceptance and rejection of rural development projects by the intended beneficiaries;
- determine the relevance of rural development projects to the intended beneficiaries; and
- recommend, where necessary, some ways of either increasing or fostering participation in rural development in the North-West.

People's participation as a device for organizing human resources is significant in the rural development process. It is the involvement of the intended beneficiaries that can help the RDP in rural areas to see the light of day. This kind of development with people is necessary in the present day South Africa as it seems to enhance economies of scale. The rural poor will identify with the projects they have initiated and may even want their completion with vested interest. It is the aim of the Government to improve the quality of rural life. But, the Government and agencies similarly involved in rural development cannot pretend to know the needs and preferences of the rural poor. They have to involve the poor right from the onset, in decision-making, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the benefits of the projects. Authentic people's participation is indispensable to make intended beneficiaries self-reliant in meeting their basic needs and making the process of their development self-sustainable.

Therefore, research on modalities and extent of people's participation in rural development is necessary. The analysis of factors which influence effective participation and some examples of practice would enable the RDP officers to increase their understanding and become practised and effective in fostering and supporting participation by the poor in rural Mafikeng in particular and even in the North-West Province, in general. It is also important to evaluate existing institutions in order to determine their appropriateness for fostering participation by the rural poor in rural development planning.

The next section addresses definitions and context since any words without content and context are ideal for manipulative purposes (Rahnema, 1997:116).

People's Participation

For the purpose of this paper, the concept 'people's participation' is defined and used in the rural development context. From a cursory perusal of the literature, however, there is an impression that there is no consensus on the definition of the concept of participation. However, Arora (1979:xvii) opines that "the doctrine of people's participation reflects the institutionalization of consent as the quintessence of a democratic system". In the context of rural development, this reflection would entail the involvement of the intended participants-cum-beneficiaries of rural development projects. Also, most importantly, this involvement has to be voluntary and spontaneous or even induced. Hence, people's participation is also regarded as a 'right'. "People have the right to participate in decision-making which directly affects their living conditions... is a form of grass-roots democracy" (Sheng, 1989:58).

On the other hand, Pacey and Cullins (1992:117) argue that, the word participation sounds too much like a concession made by powerful outsiders, rather than an essential process involving real exchanges, commitments to other people, practical experiments and mutual learning. But, coercion should always be obviated in order to achieve the above-mentioned 'consent'. It is this consent that ensures a harmonious relationship between rural development and participant-beneficiaries. This has prompted Chopra et al (1990) to view participatory development as a new socio-economic force aiming for sustained development at the village level.

According to Tacconi and Tisdell (1992:270), in the participatory approach, participation is mainly seen as involvement by beneficiaries in decision-making, leading to their empowerment (Tacconi and Tisdell, 1992:270). This assertion is unreservedly shared by Mulwa (1987:vii): "The approach is basically an attempt to involve the rural poor in the transformation process, not as development 'tools' but social change 'agents' for their destiny". This, of course, presupposes the participation by the rural people in decision-making, monitoring, implementation and distribution of benefits of (rural) development projects. This sentiment is entailed in Bamberger (1991:282) that community participation refers to a process whereby beneficiaries influence all aspects of development projects rather than passively receiving benefits. The African National Congress (1994:5), too, maintains that development is not about the delivery of goods to a passive citizenry. It is about active involvement and growing empowerment. Most, importantly though, these beneficiaries should be the poor who have for a long time been excluded from the decision-making stage of rural development projects, but only included in the implementation stage. As Sharma (1979:68) correctly puts it:

Participation is not regarded as having been committed to any social goals but is regarded as a technique for setting goals choosing priorities, and deciding what resources to commit to goal attainment.

The rationale for this is that when those directly concerned are effectively involved in planning and implementation of projects there is always some remarkable success of the latter. This appears to have prompted Waddimba (1979:4) to state that:

In general, programmes ostensibly aimed at benefiting the poor will only improve their livelihoods and productivity in the long term to the extent these groups have had an effective input into policy formulation and programmed design and execution.

This agrees with Paccioto's (1992:5) and Madlavu and Davies (1993:62) views that to participate is to partake, to share, to own and that people must be allowed to be responsible for their own development, they should determine their needs and frame their own development strategies and that they should own the process. In this way, Lammerink (1994:363) holds that the poor become active and conscious participants who based on their local knowledge, are in a position to transform their own situation. But, according to the World Commission of Churches the articulation of needs is not enough, as this may end up being manipulated. Therefore, Uphoff et al (1979:28) call for the creation of an institutional framework where all social groups can take part with each other as equal partners and can set the frame within which planning can happen. This postulates, therefore, that the people can only safeguard against this manipulation if they are organized. This necessitated redefinition of people's participation.

Garibay (1991:129) defines participation as:

Getting members of rural communities to participate actively and responsibly in analyzing their problems, identifying solutions based on their knowledge and available natural resources, taking decisions on accomplishing their development.

Hence, Lammerink (1994:367) emphasizes a need for a participatory model of development in which local people are not just involved in the identification, formulation, implementation and evaluation of projects, but where their knowledge and skills are the building blocks for development initiatives. In the same tone, Bortei-Doku (1991:62) defines people's participation as:

The process by which the rural poor are able to organize themselves and through their own organization are able to identify their own needs and share in the design, implementation and evaluation of the participatory action.

It is this ability to organize that can enable the rural poor to collectively pool their efforts and whatever resources they decide to pool, to attain

objectives they set for themselves (Hobley, 1991:110). Thus, participation is viewed as an active process in which the participants take initiatives and actions that are stimulated by their own thinking and deliberation and over which they can exert effective control (Hobley, 1991:110). Then, this is likely to instil in the beneficiaries a sense of self-reliance.

As can be seen in the foregoing definitions, whichever diction used by different authors, more emphasis is on the (rural) poor. To paraphrase Stiefel and Wolfe (1994:5), this emphasis on the poor is deliberately intended to exclude certain interpretations of participation that might be legitimate for other purposes. This specification was overtly articulated in a January 1982 World Consultation Forum on the Church and People's Participation that:

People's participation is the people's initiative, to assert themselves as subjects of history. When we speak of people we are referring to a particular group in society, namely the poor, the oppressed, the marginal group. (Mulwa, 1987:vii).

Development

To date, a myriad of authors attach different meanings to the concept of development. Some authors even look at it with regard to what it implies. For example, development might imply changes in the living standards of the people, improving the national economy, changing social relations and establishing equity through sharing of power and equal opportunities for all. These attachments reflect the nature of the term development as a 'multidimensional process' (Todaro, 2000:162). This nature characterizes the contemporary definitions of development. Korten, in Madlavu et al (1993: 60) defines development as:

A process whereby the members of a society increase their personal and institutional capacities to mobilise and manage resources to produce sustainable and justly distributed improvements in their quality of life consistent with their own aspirations.

This definition seems to implicitly hold that people should be involved in the whole process of development planning (in all the stages). The more overt definition with regard to people's participation is by Nkwinti, in (Madlavu and Davies, 1993:61):

Development as a process denotes the transformation of social and economic relations through political actions and process, and by mobilising and organizing of community resources to effect a shift in the balance of power between the developed elites and the developing and underdeveloped majority of society.

As can be seen in this definition, for meaningful development to take off there has to be devolution of power from the elite to the poor. This implies that the

poor need to be empowered to be able to control the direction of development. In like manner, the African National Congress (1994:139) emphasises that, the RDP structures must ensure that the historically oppressed communities get the resources they need to participate meaningfully in planning processes and decision-making. This is, of course, in line with Mulwa (1987) that people should not be the tools of development but the active agents of this process. It is also a contribution to the debate on who controls development.

At this stage, it is important, to shift from the macro concept 'development' and dwell on the micro concept 'rural development' in particular.

Rural Development

The concept 'rural development' unlike 'development' from which it derives is at least less complex with regard to definition. It is basically a means or device whereby any agency directly or indirectly involved with improving rural socio-economic conditions tries to execute its task. Lele (1975:20) defines rural development as:

Improving the living standard of the low-income population residing in rural areas and making the process of their development self-sustaining.

Ideally, therefore, rural development is about improving the living standards or livelihood of the rural poor and increasing their agricultural productivity, making it non-fading through a joint venture (for instance, own effort and help by outside agencies). Therefore, rural development appears to be more oriented towards benefiting the poor. Chambers (1983:147) is even clearer in the following definition:

Rural development is a strategy to enable a specific group of people, poor rural women and men, to gain for themselves and their children more of what they want and need. It involves helping the poorest among those who seek a livelihood in rural areas to demand and control more of the benefits of development. The group includes small scale farmers, tenants and the landless.

Participation in rural development is, therefore, participation by the rural poor and not by the elite group. The emphasis on the poor is also supported by Nkwinti (Madlavu and Davies, 1993:61), that development is about power shifting from the elites to the underdeveloped majority of society. As regards the poor rural women, the African National Congress (1994) is even more emphatic that the RDP should benefit the resourceless poor farmers, especially women. Hence, Abasiokong (1982:93) maintains that:

Rural development, regardless of which approach is used has one common goal - improving the welfare of the rural majority.

The above-mentioned definitions of development (Nkwinti; and Korten) and of rural development (Chambers, 1983; Lele, 1975) reflect the emphasis of

development on a need to involve the intended beneficiaries in every stage of project planning. The question of who participates is explicitly addressed that, it is the previously excluded majority, the poor – whom Oakley et al (1991:19) term ‘the last’.

Historical Perspective of Participation

According to Winder et al (1981:13), it was through the influence of Paolo Freire’s work on the concept of conscientization and analysis of the structural obstacles to development of the Latin American peasant which stressed the dialogical approach to project work and his argument that the peasant should be the subject and not the object of development projects that participation emerged. But, according to Catanese (1984:124), the idea of citizen participation in planning has been a long standing and an intrinsic part of the history of planning. The words ‘participation’ and ‘participatory’ development (Rahnema, 1997:117) appeared for the first time in the development jargon during the late 1950s. This confirms Stiefel and Wolfe’s (1994:21) view that the term popular participation entered into the international discourse on development during the 1960s and achieved wider currency during the 1970s. Hence, in rural development, however, the concept of participation emerged in the 1970s. During this epoch, participation became a major concern for United Nations agencies such as, International Labour Organization, World Health Organization, Food and Agricultural Organization, International Fund for Agricultural Development and United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (Oakley and Marsden, 1984:14). The Food and Agricultural Organization, identifying participation as a kingpin of future strategies to tackle rural underdevelopment and realising the success of the Small Farmer Development Programme (SFDP) in Nepal launched in 1980, the People’s Participation Programme (PPP) as a basic strategy to rural development (Bortei-Doku, 1991:61). Since then a large number of resources has gone into the promotion of participation in rural development.

Unfortunately however, during the 1980s, participation lost ground in the international discourse. By the Grace of God nonetheless, since the beginning of the 1990s into the 21st century the hopes for participation as a way out of otherwise insoluble crises of human relationships and livelihood have been reviving. This revival has been marked with the February 1990 International Conference on Popular Participation in the Recovery and Development Process in Africa at Urusha, Tanzania. In the opening statement of this Conference, Adedeji was quoted as saying:

The democratization of the development process – by which we mean the empowerment of the people, their involvement in decision-making, in implementation and monitoring process – is a *conditio sine qua non* for socio-economic recovery and transformation. African leadership and the African people must not desire self-reliance but must will it (Shaw, 1990:20).

Another subsequent hallmark was the May 1990 Global Seminar on Participatory Development in Florence, Italy (Stiefel and Wolfe, 1994:21). This rise and fall of participation in development was attributed to the two core theories of development and underdevelopment, modernization and dependency, for which space and time denies discussion.

Despite these vicissitudes vis-a-vis participation, people's participation in rural development has become commonplace for developing governments and development agencies. For example, the African National Congress (1994:5) holds that the RDP is focused on the people's most immediate needs, and it relies, in turn, on their energies to drive the process of meeting these needs. Therefore, the success of the RDP hinges on the participation of the intended beneficiaries. One would argue however, that participation has not engendered any significant changes in rural development, simply because it is only the credo for many governments of the Third World but not always practised.

Theoretical Perspectives on Peoples Participation

Since the emergence of participation in (rural) development, many authors and practitioners seem to conceptualize about participation. The emphasis is that to be successful, a project should be designed and executed with significant participation of the beneficiaries at each step of the way. Beneficiaries participate when they understand and appreciate how a project may help them (Salmen, 1987:50). But, most importantly they must choose what they want. There is a growing consensus that participation by the intended beneficiaries improves the project performance. This is, of course, in line with the people-centred development approach. Perhaps this consensus was as a result of the disillusionment of the development practitioners in the conventional 'top-down' strategies. As a corollary, people are no longer seen as tools but as agents of development. Aryeetey (1990:206) also maintains that the success of rural development is quite clearly linked to active participation. It will indeed postulate the participation of people in the development process as it offers opportunities for real ownership of development. Adejunmobi (1990:225) supports that:

Such an involvement not only ensures the enthusiasm of the people to participate in helping to change the community life but will guarantee their material support and reduce both covert and overt complaints which tend to arise when they feel they are overtaxed because they themselves would have been part of the decision..

This, according to Uphoff in Bamberger (1991:282), enhances the likelihood of project sustainability and can also ensure a project's social acceptability as beneficiaries participate in it. In like manner, in rural development,

participation as perceived by Oakley and Marsden (1984:17) is a kind of injection that can be applied to rural development projects and consequently influence its outcome. Whether this is just a theoretical gimmick or rhetoric, it is discussed in this paper.

Participation as a Means and as an End

There are two schools of thought with regard to participation. One school views participation as a rightful goal of planning and organizing process (as an end). The other school views it as a means toward the achievement of other ends. According to Picciotto (1992:2) irrespective of the end result, participation generates a sense of well being among group members. This refers to a process the outcome of which is meaningful participation (Oakley and Marsden, 1984:27). De Wit (1989:43) adds that people have the right and duty to participation in projects which affect their lives. On the other hand, Oakley and Marsden (1984) continue that where participation is interpreted as a means, it is essentially describing a state or an input into a development programme. By the same token, Sheng (1989:58) holds that participation is a means to achieve better project results and facilitate the project execution. The belief is that people know their needs and wants and thus, all they need is participation through the sanction of the authorities. It is held, therefore, that with participation effectiveness and efficiency can be achieved. Perhaps one could create another school of thought that participation in rural development is both a means and an end *per se*. This dimension could argue that there is a need to participate in decision-making and eventually evaluate projects (END) and that the only means of meeting this need is participation (MEANS). In view of this, participation by 'the last' could be the best prescription for effective rural development. This seems to prompt the following question.

Why Participation?

Though different authors use different diction to account for why people need to participate, there is no vast chasm in their reasons. According to Mathur (1986:19), the real purpose of participation is to develop human capabilities for development decision-making and action. Hence, Lisk (1985:18) opines it is in the planning system where the impact of popular participation on the pace and pattern of development is great. Both Mathur (1986) and Lisk (1985) are summed up by Conyers (1986:103), Oakley et al (1991:17-18), Bamberger (1991) and de Wit et al (1989:43) that participation maximizes the chances of efficiency, effectiveness self-reliance, coverage and sustainability.

As regards rural development projects' efficiency, participation facilitates a continual flow of information about conditions, needs and attitudes, without which development projects and programmes are likely to fail (Conyers,

1986). Olujimi and Egunjobi (1991:171) share this view that the involvement of the people will allow for getting to know what they want and how they want these needs provided. This will eventually encourage the acceptance of such schemes by the rural poor. Oakley et al (1991) holds that this free flow of information helps to minimize possible disagreements and is economic in a sense in which time, energy and cost on professionals are reduced. Also, participation as put by Paul (1987:4), promotes agreement, cooperation and interaction with beneficiaries and between them and the implementing agencies of the project so that delays are reduced and a smoother flow of services is achieved, and overall costs are minimized. Thus, participation allows for more efficient use of the resources available to a project. Hence, the African National Congress (1994:11) opines that without thoroughgoing democratization, the resources and potential of our country and people will not be available for a coherent programme of reconstruction and development.

The people's knowledge, skills and resources will lead to a successful completion of the objectives of the project whose result is project effectiveness (Oakley et al, 1991). As Paul (1987:3) puts it, this entails the "co-production" of goods and services by beneficiaries jointly with the project authority. This leads to a better match of project services with beneficiary needs and constraints. The line of thinking in this regard is aptly put by Salmen (1987:3) that: "Development projects would be more effective if they better incorporated the point of view of people who are intended beneficiaries".

Okafor (1982:135) opines that in many cases the local people are likely to be more familiar than technically competent planners with specific circumstances in the localities where they live and can therefore make a positive contribution based on local knowledge to rural development plans.

When participation in development is considered a basic democratic right, it breaks the mentality of dependence and promotes self-awareness and confidence which equal self-reliance. The latter solicits great independence and control by the people over their lives (Oakley et al, 1991). Thus, participation is imperative as the basis for self-reliance in development. People's participation can be viewed as an instrument of empowerment of the people so they are able to initiate actions on their own and thus influence the process and outcomes of development (Paul, 1987:3).

Oakley et al (1991) also believes that participation will increase the number of rural people, 'the last', who can potentially benefit from development. The previously excluded rural poor will be brought within the direct influence of development (in all the stages). Most importantly, as put by Conyers (1986:103) it is a basic democratic 'right' that people should be involved in their own development.

Lastly, Lele's (1975) concept of 'sustainability' of the development process is resuscitated. According to Chopra et al (1990), participatory development is a new socio-economic force aiming for sustained development at village level.

Bamberger (1991:281) concludes that owing to the limited capacity of the national and local agencies to handle development projects and programmes without community assistance, the development planners have increasingly recognized the importance of listening to the people, both to understand their needs and to mobilize their potential for development. According to Paul (1987:3), participation may serve as a more limited objective of building capacity whereby beneficiaries may share in the management task of the project by taking an operational responsibility. Thus, participation promotes the sustainability of a project beyond the disbursement period to the level of beneficiary interest and competence in project management. This is shared by Salmen (1987:7) who maintains that when such self-respect and own identity of 'the last' have been enhanced and reinforced by a project, the latter becomes a catalyst for self-improvement and the development it achieves becomes self-generating. Okafor (1982:136) also emphasises that a rural population of a particular area is likely to be sensitive to the practical possibilities for implementing rural development plans and can, therefore, contribute to formulation of both feasible alternatives and workable procedures for implementation in that locality.

With regard to the distribution of benefits, participation can also ensure 'egalitarianism' (Chikulo, 1979:4) through which more equitable distribution of project benefits is ensured, by facilitating access to these benefits by the politically and economically weak groups (Bamberger, 1991), 'the last'. Therefore, it is equally important for the RDP to incorporate all major stakeholders in establishing, implementing and evaluating policy (African National Congress, 1994:137). However, Okafor (1982:135) maintains that much of the fear and uncertainty about the negative impacts of some rural development projects is a consequence of misunderstanding, which arises directly from a lack of proper involvement, and therefore leads to minimal appreciation of positive consequences which can result. Therefore, unless the local citizens have the assurance that their local aspirations are both known and carefully taken into account by government planners, they can never feel involved.

All these authors, seem to concur that much of the effort directed towards improving the lives of the rural poor is frustrated by the fact that the majority of these people are unable to benefit owing to their marginalization from the development process (Winder et al, 1981:9). Hence, they advocate for people's participation in their own development. The premise is that the needs of the poor and their ability to make choices are of paramount impor-

tance in rural development planning. Their needs and influence can be the hallmark of the best run rural development projects and programmes. It is noteworthy, therefore, that there are many arguments for beneficiary participation in development projects (van Wicklin iii et al, 1987:4). In summary, these are that it is economical, makes for better project design, acts as catalyst for mobilizing further development efforts and promotes the creation of local level awareness, competence and capacity where it did not exist before.

These reasons cannot be vindicated without some degree of devolution and decentralization of power.

Participation and Power

The understanding of meaningful participation seems to hinge on the involvement of 'the last' in determining the direction and distribution of the benefits of development. Most important in this regard is power. This is aptly put by Bryant and White (1982:210) that participation should be considered in its relation to power. This is critical, as Attwood (2002:26) maintains "in this historical moment where the forces of globalisation present new challenges to how rural communities are positioned, and engage in the fray of debates about development".

The basic point is that unless 'the last' have power to back their preferences and demands these demands are unlikely to be met (Bryant and White, 1982:216). This point could have prompted Conyers and White (1984:219) to believe strongly that decentralization of power is a prerequisite for effective participation. Therefore, power and participation are inter-related (Attwood, 2002:25). The earlier United Nations Research Institute for Social Development researchers also hold that any serious advocacy of increased participation implies a redistribution of power in favour of those hitherto powerless (Stiefel and Wolfe, 1994:4). In essence, therefore, a participatory process is actually a system of decentralized decision-making by local leaders (Sant and Gow, 1985:116) who are normally self-centred and would not want to devolve power. However, it should not be a 100% devolution of power. This point will be elaborated later.

Even if power could be devolved, the different forms of participation which do not necessarily yield successful results, could hamper meaningful participation.

Forms of Participation

The vexed question in this regard is: who is to represent the poor? Should they be those who have begun to step out of poverty, or those from the hard core of the truly poor? As regards the degree, should they have the opportunity to protest, or the right to be consulted, or representation on the

board, or have a majority on the board, or actually take over the direction as well as the planning of all programmes? (Oakley, 1980:20). Be that as it may, there are various ways of fostering participation. Bryant and White (1982:210) and Mathur (1986:19) identify six modes of participation. On the other hand (Sheng, 1989:58) refers to Arnstein's (1969) forms of participation. These are:

- a) representation by a solid citizens' group or educated and moneyed (sic) people without the participation of the grassroots (Mathur, 1986:19);
- b) appointment of local leaders to official positions to represent the beneficiaries (Mathur, 1986:19). But, according to Vasoo (1991:4) this can result in under-representation of 'the last' who have the lower socio-economic status or what Arnstein's (1969) referred to as token representation;
- c) people are consulted about the projects but they do not actually participate in planning and management of these projects. This exemplifies Arnstein's (1969) informing mode, consultation (Mathur, 1986:19);
- d) people are consulted throughout the process and actively participate in planning and management, also allowed to select one of several plans (Arnstein's (1969) partnership and citizen control). This typifies real participation, (Mathur, 1986:19);
- e) beneficiaries asked to legitimize projects identified as formulated by the government (Arnstein's manipulation) (Mathur, 1986:19); and
- f) the representatives control the highest policy-making body of the agency, also control funds and expenditure and the representatives failing to respond to the poor's needs but only reflect their own interests (Mathur, 1986:19).

A good mix of 'the last' and 'the first' (elites) is therefore, necessary. Specifically in rural development, authors refer to spontaneous, coercive and induced modes. But, Hall and Midgley (1988:93-94) sum up all these under the manipulative and participatory modes. The manipulative is one where participation is marginal and limited to the implementation stage of a project. In this mode, beneficiaries are subjected to a crude 'top-down' planning and resource transfer along with co-opting of potentially autonomous local governments. Oakley and Marsden (1984:20) terms this mode "collaborative-input-sponsorship" in which people are informed about cut and dried decisions. The people's involvement is only regarded as an input. Mode (c) and (e) are good examples. As regards participatory mode, the state attempts to promote people's participation and devolve power of decision-making to local institutions. Mode (d) is a good example. It is somehow quite realistic (Hall et al 1988:94).

It could be realistic, but without proper ways of promoting participation, it (participation) may not be realized.

Promoting Participation

There are four recommendable ways of promoting participation in rural development as outlined by Oakley and Marsden(1984:20-25) and Mathur (1986):

- Collaboration of beneficiaries is sought by informing them of the rural development plans. They have no direct control of development projects and programmes.
- Organization: the World Conference on Agrarian Reform and Rural Development declares that active participation of the poor can only be brought about by adequate people's organizations at the local level (Oakley and Marsden, 1984). These organizations, it is believed, are vehicles for participation.
- Empowering: an effective participation contains three main elements, viz. sharing of power and scarce resources, deliberate efforts by social groups to control their own destinies and improve their living conditions, and opening up opportunities 'from below'. Participation is empowering, therefore. The main sentiment is that the poor should be empowered to make decisions on their own development (Swanepoel, 1992a: 18, 1992b). Without power, popular participation will not be meaningful as participants will be unable to impact on plans and programmes of rural development. This is illustrated by the adage "Give man a fish and he eats today, teach man to fish and he can eat every day". Mathur (1986:37) explains this better by saying that the poor need some training as a means of empowering.
- Community Development: the community needs some meaningful discussion and interpretation and implementation of their plans. This results in local needs and opinions being taken into account and responsibilities delegated at local levels.

As can be seen, the last three methods of participation can be instrumental and effective in promoting popular participation in rural development as people do have some say in designing the projects and programmes for rural development. Oakley et al (1991:216-228) highlight several instruments to realize collaboration, organization, empowerment and community development.

Instruments

By instruments is meant, institutional devices used by a project to organize and sustain community participation (Paul, 1987:5). First, project group meetings and discussion: these function as a forum to get people involved, help create awareness of issues, subsequently, solutions to, to serve as a basis for a future, more formal structure and to build solidarity cohesion

and unity action. The meetings are between 'the last' and the project staff as equal partners, in the language, own pace and style of 'the last'.

Second, workshops, seminars and camps, in which there is no hierarchical relationship between attendants, but linking of theory with practice and relating of theoretical content of the workshop to the everyday lives of the participants. The content and outcomes of the workshop are structured by the participants themselves on the basis of their experience and lessons learnt from that experience. These serve as platforms for the rural to come together, to share their experience and ideas and in the process, develop an understanding of reality and also of ways to tackle their problems and fulfil their needs.

Third, popular theatre and song, in which current issues are explained and crucial problems are identified and clarified. It is essentially an animated situation and a kind of continuous discussion in action. According to Kidd and Byran (1982) in Boeren (1992:260), theatre based on village situations exploits social reality, encourages audience participation, is expressed in local idioms and is accessible to the community at large. The actors provide the songs, choreography, the dances, creates scenarios and are responsible for the themes to be developed. This is reckoned an effective medium for a lot of development workers because it is able to build on skills people already have. One remarkable example in Southern Africa is *laedza batanani* which loosely refers to "Community Awakening" (Kidd and Byran, 1982).

All these methods and instruments seem to be workable to promoting people's participation in rural development. However, there are also formidable hurdles to be reckoned with in real practical situations.

Obstacles

De Wit et al (1989:45) highlight that launching the concept of 'people's participation' is, however, quite different from introducing its practice. Nonetheless, people's participation is a necessary evil and/or saint for an effective and efficient rural development project. Despite a myriad of ways and instruments of promoting participation, obstacles to meaningful participation are formidable. These are classified by, *inter alia*, Mathur (1986:34) as obstacles within the agency, within the community and within the society. But, most inevitable are bureaucracy and socio-cultural constraints.

Bureaucracy

Bureaucratic tutelage renders the rural poor passive recipients of governmental services. Bureaucrats have disdain for the capabilities of the poor to determine needs and direct development (Mathur, 1986:34). This is because according to the Economic Commission for Latin America (1982:90) the state is too middle-class, ie. the functionaries working in government

agencies are drawn mainly from the urban class. This makes their lifestyles, values and motivations to clash both with their assigned tasks and the rural poor class. Lacking adequate training for mobilizing these poor, they feel they know what is best for their clientele. Their approach is likely to be patronizing and authoritarian. Rural development projects thus become the preserve of the bureaucrats. De Wit et al (1989:45) hold that the social structures in targeted areas are such that information is channelled through local leaders who are often political patrons or professional middle-men, thus the rural poor remain silent and the local leaders make decisions about important issues also affecting the former without the former's involvement. Tacconi and Tisdell (1992:275) see participatory approach as a collision path between the governmental bureaucracies and the village social arrangements. The two groups often have different and contradictory interests. The need for power sharing is often resented by those holding that power. As a result, they are likely to support participation half-heartedly (de Wit et al, 1989:53). That is, the government would prefer central decision-making and vest development initiatives in the old rhetorical participative flavour:

A government may feel it is rather cumbersome to embark on community participation: it will be time consuming, requires more manpower or will lead to a slower implementation of...projects (de Wit et al, 1989:53).

The government may prefer to continue to perform political, technical and administrative functions and thus to monopolize power.

As a corollary, the poor tend to reject participation in the project if they believe their influence on the project will be minimal (Tacconi and Tisdell, 1992:275). Also, most defeating is that the international conditions during the 1980s and the early years of participation in rural development, have both encouraged and constrained popular organization in Africa (Shaw, 1990:8-9). As regards donor agencies, delivering aid efficiently is the overriding priority. Participation is secondary and often incongruent with the political and organizational imperatives of conventionally managed projects (van Wicklin iii et al, 1987:4). This is perpetuated by the cold war.

Besides the bureaucratic obstacle, the social relations in the rural areas could also obstruct people's participation in projects.

Socio-Cultural Constraints

A significant factor restricting participation by the poor is their low level of awareness (Mathur, 1986:33). It takes additional time and resources to mobilize due to consultation with the poor and far more people than if the project were executed without their involvement. Fragile projects may become overburdened and collapse owing to organizational complexity or the frustration of those involved (van Wicklin iii et al, 1987:4). As a result, public services are

monopolized by the affluent who render them obscure to the poor. This monopoly results in the poor lacking resources for effective participation (adequate information, appropriate contacts, money and often time).

According to Oakley et al (1991:13), the history of marginalization of the rural poor has rendered them dependent on hand-outs, to lack initiative, and despise their ability to participate in rural development projects. As regards women, Oakley et al (1991:13) maintain that the male-dominated culture and society of the Third World are an obstacle to their participation in development activities. For example, women's roles are traditionally male-prescribed and they tend to inhibit them from participating in their own development. Sometimes, local participation becomes informal since the beneficiaries, being mostly illiterate, are often in no position to be in direct control of the system (Aryeetey, 1990:208). This is worsened by the agents' lack of understanding of cultural and language differences between them and the poor. Concisely, van Wicklin iii et al (1987:4) maintain that the difficulty of implementing participation in practice is the main obstacle to participation.

People's participation in Rural Mafikeng: Examples

Methodology

The following examples are based on the results of a micro-level field survey of a sample of rural development projects in the rural Central District of the North-West Province. The sample comprised four projects in four rural areas in and around Mafikeng. Only potential and active participants in rural projects were interviewed in the study. As regards projects included in the survey, a purposive sample of four case studies of rural development projects were undertaken. This was to ensure that they were representative of the two most successful and the two least successful cases.

Miga Village Wire Knitting Project

Miga Wire Knitting Project (MWKP) was launched under the auspices of the Agricultural Corporation (Agricor), after prolonged negotiations between two women villagers and the Agricor project co-ordinator. The villagers were inspired by a similar project they had seen near Mafikeng. Having convinced the Agricor project co-ordinator on three attempts, a village meeting was convened and reconvened to explain the envisaged self-help project (MWKP). From the meeting, five members from Miga and five from Ikopeleng villages (popularly known as 200) emerged as pioneers, nine women and one man.

In the beginning, Agricor provided a wire knitting board bought from Swaziland, one trainer (training of the first ten members lasted for three weeks), wire, 100 corrugated iron sheets and 10 bags of cement towards the construction of a shelter. The shelter was built by volunteers from the vil-

lage on the stand allocated by the Chief. In the second stage, Agricor granted a loan of R10000 to the project. The MWKP established a committee to receive suggestions, complaints and recommendations from the project participants and convey them to the chief who in turn then conveys them to the co-ordinator. But since 27 April 1994, the co-ordinator had been discarded and committee and members are able to suggest and solve disagreements.

On the other hand, despite the involvement of some people in decision-making, their participation in the implementation stage was very minimal in the MWKP. The community attributed the apathy to monopolistic tendencies by some members (women) in the project. Three women who were actually the remaining members of the first ten pioneers and trainees in Wire Knitting were allegedly disallowing aspirant new members to join. However, these three women on the other hand attributed the apathy to laziness (as Wire Knitting is labour-intensive), unwillingness of the people to participate and people's apathy towards village meetings. Other community members reported that, when the establishment of the project was conceived, they were neither involved nor were they informed, only the first ten members participated in the conception of the project. Also, the objectives of the project were formulated by the ten pioneers and the co-ordinator alone with the exclusion of the other intended beneficiaries. As a result, the plan was also adopted by this group. The poor were never afforded a chance to comment on the proposal and the final plan of the project. Hence, it was considered a personal or group business. That led the lack of enthusiasm and apathy because the people did not identify with decision to launch the project is their own.

Power was embedded on the leadership of a committee three wire-knitters. It can be argued, therefore, that the committees did not safeguard the interests of the rural poor *vis-a-vis* manipulation by outside agencies as supposed to. Instead, they used their power and position to monopolize and serve their own interests. Though, it depicted some extent of the devolution and decentralization of power, in practice, power was concentrated in the committees. The larger community was completely alienated and disempowered. That had also alienated them from the project. Hence, the project is least successful owing to a lack of some injection of the intended beneficiaries.

Though the participation of the people in the implementation was generally poor, the implementation of the project was a reality. But, perhaps the initial objective of improving the living standard of the poor was still far fetched and elusive. Only the ten pioneers benefited and the three who still remained benefit from the project.

The community was generally not happy and felt marginalized as only a group of nine women and one man present at the meeting between themselves and the chief and the Agricor co-ordinator, participated. The rest were not involved when the initiative was conceived. It was because they were

not invited, nor was there a *pitso* before the meeting with the Agricor co-ordinator. They only learnt about the existence of the project when some were asked to volunteer in the erection of a *mokhukhu* (a shack) to be used for the implementation of the project. This postulated that the time of the implementation of the project rested with only those present at the meeting, with the exclusion of the poor.

At the time of the study, only three women remained in the project. That was attributed to these three members wanting to impose prices, working time and issues on other members. Hence, the latter were excluded in the decision-making, implementation, monitoring and evaluation stages. Decision-making about who participated in wire-knitting was the preserve of these three women.

Illiteracy was identified as one of the obstacles to participation. The other members of the community indicated the desire to participate in wire knitting but doubted their skill for participation. They were aware of the monopolistic tendencies but they seemed to have accepted these conditions. They held that even if they could attack the monopoly, it would be a futile exercise because they lacked the technical know-how of wire knitting. Agricor made a mistake in this regard, only the ten pioneers were trained and no further training of people was carried out.

As a result, the project would fold once the three participants terminated their participation due to either illness or death. The local chief is not an obstacle to the project. He had actually allocated land for the project when asked to. He did not interfere much in the running of the project. All that he would appreciate was that he should be informed about the operations of the project.

Though the majority of the poor were excluded at the inception, they indicated interest in participating in the implementation. But, they could not because of the monopolistic tendencies of the WKP participants. The three women claimed the project was identified by the community. Yet, the non-participants alleged that the Agricor Project co-ordinator identified that project and through consultation and manipulation (Arnstein) consulted the community and asked to legitimise it. It was never a local initiative. This corroborates Arnstein's information mode (the chief and all present at the meeting were informed about the project and its objectives). Nonetheless, the project was accepted by and relevant to the community. The only major problem was that it was infested with monopolistic tendencies which inhibited participation by the other stakeholder groups in the project.

Signal Hill/Lonely Park Village Sewing Project

The Signalhill Self-help Project (SSP) was started in 1991 under the auspices of the Mmabana Social Welfare (MSW). The MSW through a social worker identified an unused primary school. The MSW then consulted with the

Chief's mother to discuss how best the building could be utilized. A women's meeting was convened where the SSP was proposed and agreed on. The objectives of the project were to establish a creche and run training for the unemployed women and school children in sewing. In this project, women were to volunteer and would be trained in making duvets, curtains and dresses. Nonetheless, only duvet and curtain making were started.

Two women, one a matriculant and the other with a standard eight qualification, were selected by the social worker and taken for training at Mmabana. On completion, the two women commenced full operation of the project. Three machines were provided by Mmabana to start the project. Public Works Department provided a water pumping engine for water supply and a fence to cover the yard. Mmabana provided sewing material. In addition, a committee of five (three men and two women) was formed to oversee the project.

On the other hand, the community alleged that only two women who later received training at Mmabana, a MSW, the chief's mother and a group of old women participated in the initial stage (decision-making). The involvement of the intended beneficiaries in decision-making appeared very desirable because it suggested getting to know what they wanted and how they wanted to be met. But, in this particular project, the decision-making process was dominated by the MSW and two women. This implies that the formulation of the objectives of the project were the preserve of the only three participants. The plan, also, was adopted by this group. The poor never had the chance to comment on the proposal and final plan. The decision was subsequently imposed on them. This implied that the final time and manner for the implementation of the project rested with the decision makers to the exclusion of the intended beneficiaries. One man reported that he, together with many other women, learnt about the existence of the creche and sewing project when they were asked to donate towards the installation of electricity in the project's building. At the time of fieldwork, only two women who were trained, still worked in the project. More than 30 women who were subsequently trained (at the project and not Mmabana) were unemployed and the others were reportedly selling their skills in the Mmabatho/Mafikeng urban area.

It is worth noting, however, that, in the beginning, most women showed resounding interest in the project. But, though that was understood in the light of self-help, the untrained volunteers became discouraged as only the two trained women got remuneration and the rest did not. The introduction of unequal and uneven remuneration killed voluntary participation in the project. The volunteers decided to stop their participation in the project and stayed at home.

Though some people were excluded in the important decision-making process, they volunteered to participate in the implementation stage. But

they later withdrew because of the lack of incentives such as remuneration and the knowledge of how and where the proceeds made from sewing were used and ended. Decision-making was reportedly the preserve of one of the two trained women (matriculant and the most educated in the project). She was actually a two-way conveyor belt between the project and Mmabana. It could imply that the villagers's plan and initiative could be foiled if Mmabana were not in tandem. This feature, together with the continued supply of material by Mmabana, could constitute some bureaucratic constraint to meaningful people's participation in the project.

Most women in the village are illiterate, hence the matriculant had disdain for their capability to fully participate in important decision-making in the project. This poses a serious socio-cultural constraint to meaningful people's participation in many rural development projects such as this one. The chief's mother also tended to interfere with the project. In connivance with the chief's mother, the matriculant monopolized decision-making in the project. That had engendered reticence among the community. As regards the committee of five, it was reportedly non-functional because none of its members were locally based. All the members were working outside of the Central district. Their election was based on their education, not on the interests of the poor. As a result, meetings were never held due to the absence of the leadership. That made the matriculant to dominate the poor because the latter were not organized or represented as a formidable force. The existence of the committee was deceiving and a travesty of the devolution of power and empowerment. As regards, the form of participation, this typifies Arnstein's informing/ consultation mode in which people are consulted about projects but they do not actually participate in planning and management of the projects. This also results in Arnstein's manipulation mode where beneficiaries are asked to legitimise projects identified and formulated by the agent. Without a doubt, if the project continued in that way, then it was likely to fold once Mmabana terminated its supply of sewing material. Therefore, the involvement of the community could inject some feature of self-sustenance in the project.

Luporong Village Road Project

The project was started by the community in November 1995 and completed in December 1995. The Luporong community had a serious problem with the slippery road during the rainy season. The community through relevant structures, on two failed occasions, tendered applications to government to help improve the road. Subsequently, the community held a meeting where it was agreed on a self-constructed road project. Men and women, employed and unemployed, volunteered to participate in the implementation as the decision was a joint-venture.

The purpose of constructing a new road was to provide an alternative easy-to-pass road for vehicles, especially school buses ferrying pupils to and from schools outside of Luporong. The community, on its own, formulated the objectives of the project. But, they did not consider politico-socio-economic implications of the project. In particular, some technical expertise which would have been desirable in the decision-making and implementation stages was not considered. However, later, it became a necessity when the project was completed but had not achieved its main objective.

Ultimately, the community, primarily motivated by the need safety of pupils to and from schools, constructed a 9.2 kilometre long road. It was constructed by men and women with the use of simple technology (spades, rakes, picks) by uprooting and cutting of trees and clearing off the bush. By December 1995, the road was complete. The only problem with the road, though, was that it was too narrow for buses to travel on. Subsequently, they established a Road Project Committee (RPC) which was charged with soliciting a bulldozer from the Department of Public Works (DPW) to level and broaden the road.

Unfortunately, a certain academic from the University of North-West (under Community Development Projects) in the province, rammed his way to the chief of the village and without the knowledge of the existence of the above-mentioned committee, the two formed their own new committee. As a result, every time the DPW replied, the chief and the new committee received the communique without passing it on to the people. At the time of the fieldwork the road had not been viable and grass had started to grow and the road to close up.

As regards general participation, both participants and non-participants indicated that the community members present at the meeting where the initiative was conceived participated. The community, together, formulated the objectives of the project. As a result, the plan was also adopted by them. Hence, they identified with the project and contributed towards its success by helping to clear off 9.2 kilometres of bush.. The implementation was a success as it rested with the decision-makers themselves but not the external agents. This enthusiasm was induced by the feeling that the decision to establish the project was their own.

At the time of the fieldwork, the project had been completed but only waiting for the DPW through the RDP regional office to respond to the request to bulldoze the road. Unfortunately, the bulldozing of the road was being delayed through the functionaries of the bureaucracy (both the chief and the DPW). This showed that it is not impossible for the poor to launch a development project without the involvement of external experts. But, probably, the project would have borne better results if the latter had been included. One other remarkable aspect in the project was that the people

were given an opportunity by the committee to fully participate in making decisions affecting them. Also, all the stages of the project were performed by the poor on their own without the involvement by the external agencies (Government, for example).

Most participants were illiterate, yet they received attention and were given equal partnership by their better off counterparts (the committee made up of matriculants). Therefore, illiteracy was not a socio-cultural problem for the project. But, nonetheless, the project invariably required some technical expertise on the width of the road. The participation of some experts was desirable.

The local chief had become a problem to meaningful people's participation in the decision-making on the project. He, together with a certain academic from UNW, had delayed the bulldozing of the road. They had established their own Reconstruction and Development Programme Committee (RDPC) separate from the already existing RPC. The contrast between the two committees is that, the RDPC, though locally based and representative of the poor, was not elected by the community. On the other hand the RPC was both representative of the poor and was also elected by the poor. Hence, the Road Project took off and was accepted by the poor. It was highlighted during the interview that the RDPC prioritized a clinic and water supply more than the road which the RPC together with the community at large prioritized. Without a doubt, real empowerment can only be realized through the establishment of a truly representative committee rather than an imposed committee. Otherwise, any other project besides the road project might be rejected and suffer as a result of a lack of support by the intended beneficiaries.

Furthermore, the chief and the RDPC had duplicated the request by the RPC to bulldoze the road. Apparently, the chief wanted to initiate projects so that he could be seen to be keen on improving the living standard of the community. He treated any local initiative as an insult to his chieftaincy. Also, he wanted to prove to be in charge and command of the village. However, the communique from the RDP and DPW did not trickle down to the community at large. That stifled people's participation in the project. On this premise, the community felt abandoned by both the DPW and RDP office. This could have a lasting negative impact on the people's perspective about the RDP and hinder rural development in Luporong.

Notwithstanding these hiccups, the people were consulted throughout the process and actively participated in its planning and management. They were also allowed to select one of several plans. This exemplifies Arnstein's partnership and citizen control which is real participation. It also typifies real and meaningful people's participation in rural development projects.

The implementation and success of this project depended 100% on people's participation, without which the project would not have even taken off. Hence, the remarkable success. Even the Government, given the bureaucracy, would not have completed it within just one month as was the case through people's participation.

Koikoi Village Water Project

The Koikoi Water Supply Project was launched in 1991 under the auspices of the Department of Water Affairs in the former Bophuthatswana. Before the launch, the only source of water for the community was one windmill. This was not adequate for the consumption and convenience of the community. Most strikingly, it was far away from the school (Koikoi Primary School). Therefore, the school formed a committee comprising the principal and teachers. They consulted the Department of Water Affairs (DWA) regarding the water problem for the school and village.

In response, the DWA sent an engineer to the village to survey and identify the most appropriate spot to sink a borehole. The engineer identified a spot more than 500 metres away from the school. The government provided an engine and its shelter. Subsequently, the committee, through the headman, convened a *pitso* to inform the community about the project by the committee and the former was ratified. Afterwards, the reticulation work was undertaken. Pipes that ran from the borehole to the school were installed. The pipes pumped water into two 'Pennel tanks' installed at the school. Besides this, several taps, all of which were supplied by the above-mentioned engine, were installed in the village.

As regards the maintenance of the project, the community had appointed a guard-cum-operator as the caretaker of the engine. His remuneration was taken from the annual water charges. The amount paid by each household was determined by the community. The committee had proposed R30 but the community's R20 was considered and approved. At first it was R2 per head in each house and later changed to R20 per house. At the time of the fieldwork, the project was complete and a tremendous success.

As regards participation in the decision-making, the community maintained that only knew about this project when the first sod was turned. At this stage and in this way the advocates of people's participation would expect the project to suffer because of the lack of participation by the intended beneficiaries (especially in the decision-making and implementation). The objectives were formulated, the proposals and the final plan adopted by the committee alone. But, at least to ensure the self-sustainability of the project somehow a representative from the community was necessary. However, the community accepted the project because they had always aspired to have their own source of regular water supply.

The stages at which participation in the project is resounding are the monitoring and evaluation. The community was consulted about who would maintain and how the project would be maintained to be sustainable. As a result, the community and the committee participated as equal partners and that had ensured participation by all the stakeholder groups. Also, self-sustainability of the project was ensured. Though the poor were not involved in the design and implementation of the project, they were keen on the maintenance of the project. At the time of the fieldwork the project was still in a good condition which was a sign of being well looked after.

Also, this project was a success because of the existence of a committee which was not representative of the poor (neither did it represent the poor). It had vested interest (to get water in the school premises). The beneficiaries, however, did not need to participate in the initial stage in order to accept and identify with the project. They accepted and identified with the project because it was relevant to the village. This exemplifies Arnstein's manipulation mode where beneficiaries were asked to legitimize the project identified by the committee and formulated by the Government. Coincidentally, the committee had the interest and need (water) of the community entwined with its.

Summary

The examples have been able to reveal the extent of people's participation in rural development projects (participation is mainly in the implementation stage); the forms of participation in the district (induced and spontaneous with no coercion); the level of the acceptance of and rejection of rural development projects (acceptance of projects very high with no rejection); and the relevance of these projects to the beneficiaries (all projects were relevant to the poor).

They have also been able:

- first, to disprove that development plans are void of local preferences and irrelevant to rural needs. The 'top-down' strategy, though imposes, correctly assumed the preferences of the rural poor. For example, the case of the Koikoi Water Project.
- second, to disprove that the intended beneficiaries are always skeptical about new plans. The beneficiaries do participate in imposed programmes and projects with concerted efforts to ensure their success. Though the poor were excluded in the initial planning stage of the projects in Miga, Signalhill and Koikoi, they were always eager to fully participate in the projects and ensure their success. There is no gainsaying, however, that with regard to Luporong, the poor definitely became skeptical about the formation of the new RDPC that replaced the RPC.
- third, to disprove that participation is only coerced or induced and never spontaneous. The Luporong Road Project proves the prevalence of the

latter in people's participation. The other three case studies prove inducement to legitimise tailored project plans. There is absolutely no naked coercion in all cases.

- fourth, to show that the rural development planning is always a 'top-down' approach with no grassroots' participation. The planners have disdain for the capability of the rural poor in the decision-making process. In all but one case (Luporong where external planners were not involved) projects were pre-planned and later legitimised by the poor. This was unfortunate because the social worker and the Agrigor co-ordinator, for example, are supposed to only facilitate the identification, by the poor, of their own needs (but not for the former to identify).
- fifth, to show that people's participation is mostly observable at the implementation stage. It was only in Luporong where people's participation occurred from the decision-making through to the evaluation stage. In Miga and Signalhill participation, proper, emerged in the implementation stage. Another variant was in the Koikoi case where participation only started in the monitoring stage.

Conclusions and Recommendations

As can be seen, people's participation in Rural Development projects is indispensable for the success and sustainability of such projects. Also, however, such involvement differs according to the situations in which people are placed. It also differs according to different critical stages of a project. For example, in the Koikoi Water Project people's participation was most critical in the implementation, monitoring and evaluation stages and not so much in the decision-making. On the other hand, community involvement was critical in the decision-making stage in the Luporong Road Project to ensure active participation by the villagers throughout the project. Most importantly, even where beneficiaries were excluded in the decision-making, they were always eager to participate in the subsequent stages because the projects were relevant to the improvement of their standards of living.

Therefore, contrary to the general belief of the participation activists, the success of rural development projects does not inevitably depend on people's participation in all the stages of the process. It could also depend on the relevance of a project to the intended beneficiaries. Most importantly, all it requires is a resounding corporation between the agents and the intended beneficiaries. This is so because the poor are generally illiterate and lack necessary expertise. Also, at inception, all projects had the concept of people's participation, though it was at different stages as seen in the examples. Commendable is that, in all examples, there were no reported cases where coercion was used to solicit people's participation. But, in almost all the examples the committees had been disdainful for the ability

of the poor to participate meaningfully in the planning, particularly the decision-making process of the projects.

As regards obstacles to participation, illiteracy (Miga, Signalhill and Koikoi), monopoly by a few (Miga Wire Knitting Project), lack of training (Miga), functionaries of the bureaucracy (Luporong, Signalhill), beneficiaries' apathy and unequal treatment by participants (Signalhill) were identified. What most people both in the community and the projects were not aware of were the various ways in which people's participation could be fostered. They considered apathy, laziness, illiteracy and a lack of awareness as insurmountable obstacles to meaningful people's participating. Yet, these could be overcome through the use of the afore-mentioned instruments.

People's participation could be improved and encouraged if the following could be done,

In the Miga Wire Knitting Project, the poor need training and education as a continuous process for more people. This would ensure equity, more hands and benefits, and self-sustainability of the project. It would also obviate monopoly. Also, the Luporong Road Project by the community was an historically remarkable local initiative. With basic technical training in measurement *vis-a-vis* the road, it could have borne remarkable results of the projects. Training and education is therefore, essential to both the success and sustenance of rural development projects. However, funding would have to be made available by either the Government or rural development agencies in order to realize these. Training and education would ensure better participation since the poor would be better informed about what they want to do (planning).

In Signalhill, the Sewing Project, Mmabana should consider the concept of equity. Since the project is for self-help, either remuneration is given to all or it is scrapped.

Apparently, people's participation without the infusion of some expertise could be meaningless. For example, the Luporong Road Project, though complete, had not yet achieved its primary objective: an alternative viable and safer road. Therefore, in their project designs, the rural people should consider the concept of expertise. In like manner, in their design of rural development project, the agents and experts should consider the concept of people's participation. These could assist in the smooth running and self-sustainability of the rural development projects.

Establishment of committees or organizations is very important for the creation of forums for meaningful participation. This is strongly recommended for Signalhill and Miga communities to dismantle monopoly and dominance on projects by a few. It would also safeguard the people's interests against manipulative rural development agencies and self-centred local leaders. Meaningful people's participation would, according to the ANC

(1994:85), require fundamental changes to institutions and processes. One hopes this will help pass control over projects to the rural poor for whom projects are intended. The lack of grassroots organizations subjects the poor to manipulation. If they could establish organizations they would have a formidable voice to articulate their needs, wants and concerns.

With regard to Signalhill, Luporung and Koikoi in particular, the composition of the committees should change. Election should not be based on educational achievements only, but also on commitment and ability to articulate and safeguard the interests and needs of the poor. The needy are the poor and, therefore, can best do the above-mentioned with the help of some expertise from the literate and outside agencies. Both the poor and the experts are needed in committees. Rural Development Projects require some expertise from the expert planners.

Consultation with and the involvement of the local poor is very important. Otherwise, there would not have been another committee (RDPC) in existence in the place of the first committee (RPC) duplicating both the nature and brief of the latter, in the case of Luporung. Therefore, the RDP must heed the committees established by the local people themselves and not try to impose their own for this could cause great apathy towards the Reconstruction and Development Projects.

Both socio-cultural and bureaucratic obstacles to people's participation could be alleviated through workshops, seminars, camps, *pitso*, popular theatre and songs. These could be used to create awareness of issues and solutions to local problems. Importantly, since most of the poor are illiterate, the process should involve the language, pace and style of the poor. They should not be excluded on this pretext. Also, in the process, the poor should be treated as equal partners by their external agents and the committees. Thus, the poor would feel free to articulate their needs and co-operate in fulfilling them. Hence, Swanepoel (1992a:3) opines that only if they participate can they learn to improve on their own action, gain in self-sufficiency and self-reliance, move towards self-help and be aware that participation is full of flaws and very tentative at first.

Regardless of the mode or form of participation used in the above-mentioned cases, rural development is for the poor, therefore, participation should be for the poor and not the elite (a group of the advantaged few). The latter's involvement might only eventuate in manipulation, co-optation and distorted planning due to power relations and diverse interests between the poor and the elite. Poor participation cannot only be blamed on apathy, the agents, committees and trained participants are equally to blame, since they do not bother to encourage and foster participation among the poor. This is simply because the former groups stand to benefit, for example, in the case of the MWKP and SSP.

Lastly, for any meaningful people's participation in rural development, the poor, the last, the marginalized, the excluded, the oppressed and, most importantly, women have to take an influential part in the project and programme design (decision-making, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of benefits). If the RDP could operate along this principle it would in no uncertain terms be a success. It should involve the people whom it intends to benefit –the poor.

For the North-West Province or/and South Africa to succeed in bringing about meaningful Rural Development, people's participation would be most desirable. The stages at which the poor should be involved could vary but for meaningful participation the involvement in all the stages of any project would be ideal. Therefore, a clearly stipulated policy for rural development is desirable. This would help both the rural development agencies and the intended beneficiaries (especially the potential monopolists of projects) to foster people's participation.

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