Participation and Poverty Alleviation in Sub-Saharan Africa

Review of the Literature and Practice

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Preface

"People living in poverty and vulnerable groups must be empowered through organisation and participation in all aspects of political, economic and social life and in particular in the planning and implementation of policies that affect them." (World Summit for Social Development: March, 1995).

This Position Paper is concerned with examining the above statement within the context of poverty and efforts to promote greater people's participation in Sub-Saharan Africa. As figures in this Paper will show, poverty is widespread in Africa in general, and in Sub-Saharan Africa in particular, and the numbers of poor people refuse to decline. In this context the paper seeks to examine, and to form some conclusions on, the potential of broader people's participation in providing a basis for meaningful approaches to poverty alleviation and poverty eradication.

In the past decade or so, 'participation' and 'participatory development' have become cornerstones of development strategies proposed by many international and bilateral development agencies and NGOs. Participation in development is seen in the context of broad societal participation in the country's political and development processes, while participatory development has come to be seen in terms of an approach and a means of building the basis for this broader participation, largely in the context of externally supported development programmes and projects. Both concepts are often used interchangeably, but their distinctiveness must be recognised.

In the preparation of this paper a number of case studies were undertaken in country by local consultants: the work of the NGO Carrefour in West Africa, Cameroon, Zimbabwe, Mozambique and South Africa. Each of these studies took a distinctive focus. The first two looked at specific examples of local level structures which were seeking to assist poor people to gain access to greater productive resources as a prerequisite to their political and economic participation. The Zimbabwe case study, on the other hand, looked more at community level action to reduce urban poverty and at the work of NGOs and government agencies. Finally the Mozambique and the South Africa studies have taken a more national level perspective and have sought to assess the potential for participatory development generally within their respective countries, given that both are emerging from periods of internal conflict. The Case Studies are presented in condensed form in chapter 2 and their main findings are discussed in 3.3.

On the basis of the above case studies and drawing upon evidence available from the literature and other documentation, the Paper examines the relationship between participatory development and poverty alleviation and seeks to draw some conclusions. While it is clearly impossible in a limited exercise such as this to draw authoritative conclusions applicable to Sub-Saharan Africa as a whole, the Paper could be said to constitute a useful contribution to the current debate concerning the use of participatory approaches in poverty alleviation strategies particular in that region.

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Chapter 1 - EXAMINING THE TERMS AND CONCEPTS

1.1. POVERTY IN SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA

The newly independent African states of the 1960s and 70s experienced steady economic growth and striking improvements in social welfare provisions for the people. For example, between 1960 and 1993 life expectancy at birth increased from 40 to 51 years, and the infant mortality rate decreased from 167 to 97 per thousand in Sub-Saharan Africa. During the last two decades adult literacy increased from 27 to 55 percent, and in the past decade the proportion of people with access to safe water increased from 25 to 43 percent (UNDP 1996). However, the socioeconomic crisis of the late 1970s and the early 1980s brought stagnation, decline and impoverishment (Adepoju, 1993; Claire, 1996). The crisis has been explained, on the one hand, by inappropriate national policies; inadequate investment in education, health and infrastructure, and discrimination against agriculture and export production. Furthermore it was argued that human as well as physical capital was underdeveloped. On the other hand, in many countries the crisis was compounded by political instability and civil strife, and also to external causes related to unfavourable terms of trade and rising debt burdens (African Development Bank, 1992).

As a response to the crisis, most African countries in the 1980s adopted structural adjustment programmes (SAPs) which were largely drafted by the World Bank and the IMF and were a condition for further aid and debt rescheduling (Adepoju, 1993; Gibbon, 1993). The World Bank (1994) claims that adjustment has generally improved the welfare of the poor. Others argue that, rather than reversing the decline in welfare, SAPs have led to further budget cuts for public services and failing living standards due to reductions in employment and wages. In the last decade there has been a dramatic decline in formal employment in almost all African countries. As a result of inflation employees have found their real wages eroded, falling on average by a quarter between 1980 and 1989. Simultaneously devaluation, market liberalisation and agricultural pricing policy have raised the prices of basic goods. The removal of food subsidies has affected negatively both the rural and urban poor's food consumption. In general, living costs have increased and consumption has decreased among the population of Africa, and the most vulnerable sectors, namely the poor, women and children are said to have suffered most (Woodward, 1992; Adepoju, 1993; Gibbon 1993; Claire, 1996). The following data sum up the present situation in Sub-Saharan Africa:

| Annual population growth | (1990-94) | 2.7 % |
| GNP per capita | (1994) | 460 $ |
| Average annual growth | (1985-94) | -1.2 % |
| Life expectancy | (1994) | 51.3 years |
| Infant mortality rate | (1994) | 92 (per 1000 live births) |
| Fertility rate | (1994) | 5.9 |
| Adult literacy rate | (1995) | 54.9 % |
| 1st, 2nd and 3rd level enrolment | (1992) | 42 % |
| Access to health services | (1992) | 56 % |
| Access to safe water | (1992) | 43 % |
| Access to sanitation | (1992) | 36 % |

In the early 1990s it was estimated that half of Africa's people lived below the poverty line, and the percentage of people living in poverty was larger than in any other parts of the world. Sub-Saharan Africa is also the only region in the world in which the number of poor is actually growing at roughly the same rate as population growth of 3 percent a year. While the poor in Africa constituted 16 percent of the world's poor in 1985, they will make up 30 percent by the year 2000 if the current trend continues (World Bank, 1993 and 1994). The figure below presents the poverty situation for Sub-Saharan Africa:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Population below poverty line (%)</th>
<th>Numbers of poor (millions)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1985</td>
<td>47.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990</td>
<td>47.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Rural areas

Approximately 90 percent of Africa's poor live in rural areas and are dependent on agriculture either directly, by growing food or cash crops, or indirectly by working on farms or by trading in agricultural inputs and products. According to all welfare indicators rural people in Africa are generally worse off than urban people. For example, in Kenya, 96% of the urban population have access to safe water, while only 38% of the rural population have the same. In Ethiopia the numbers are 69% for the urban population and only 9% for the rural (Cleaver and Donovan, 1995; World Bank, 1994). The availability of basic sanitation and health services in Sub-Saharan Africa is illustrated below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rural population</th>
<th>Urban population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Access to health services</td>
<td>49%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Access to safe water</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Access to sanitation</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Rural poverty is related to the fact that in most countries in Africa agricultural production has grown much slower than the population. A World Bank report in 1989 suggested that a minimum agricultural growth rate of 4 percent was needed in order to have any impact on poverty. Among ten of the big Sub-Saharan African countries, only four, Nigeria, Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda, came close to this target in the period 1988-1992. For 70 percent of the Sub-Saharan countries, agricultural development fell notably short of this target (Cleaver and Donovan, 1995). In analysing such statistics we have to take into account that an increase in food production does not necessarily mean increased access of the poorest in society if their real incomes are decreasing.
While it has been argued that the rural population in Africa appear to have had real income gains from policies to raise producer prices, most of the rural population is still dependent on purchases of food (Husain and Fernandes, 1996). As rural incomes have not kept pace with the rises in food prices, poverty has inevitably increased. The terms of trade for small farmers have been declining in many countries, as the prices of non-agricultural goods have risen faster than prices for agricultural produce. The prices of export crops have also risen more than those for food crops, which are the basis of the agricultural production of the rural poor (Woodward, 1992; Claire, 1996). Furthermore, the rural poor are both victims and indirect causes of the deterioration of the natural environment of Africa. In the past two decades there have been widespread incidences of soil erosion and degradation, water pollution and siltation of irrigated areas. Many of the rural poor have been alienated from the land by political and economic elites and tend to have access only to fragile resources. More intensive cultivation and farming on land in vulnerable semi-arid areas has also decreased the fertility of the soil, and left the poor with little food (Cleaver and Donovan, 1995; World Bank, 1994).

Urban areas

Between 1980 to 1995, the urban population of Africa grew from 24 to 34 percent of the total population. Though the levels of urbanization vary considerably, the average annual growth rate was at 4.4 percent between 1975-1995 and is expected to stay at a level of 4.1 percent for the next twenty years (United Nations 1996, World Bank, 1996). Urban poverty is on the increase and squatter and slum settlements are burgeoning in African cities. This situation is largely due to unemployment and lack of formal economic opportunities (African Development Bank, 1992). Budget cuts in the public sector have led to a sharp decline in wages, as well as a large numbers of employees being sacked. The same has, to a certain degree, happened in the private sector. Retrenched workers experience loss of income security and increased hardship. Though these groups have not traditionally been seen as poor, they have become so as a result of the general economic decline in urban areas. In Africa’s cities an increasing number of people are moving into the informal sector on both a full time and a part time basis. Public employees often go into second jobs as a result of declining family incomes. As labour supply is rising to the informal sector, competition increases and the relative stability achieved there by the most vulnerable sector of the urban population is undermined (Gibbon, 1993). At the same time, there tends to be a reduced demand for the services traditionally offered by the informal sector. In some countries the urban poor are worse off than their rural counterparts, and they have been especially hurt by the removal of food subsidies (Claire, 1996; World Bank, 1994; Woodward, 1992).

Cuts in Public Services

While the need for public services tends to increase in a period of economic hardship, public budgets for health and education are on the decline in most African countries (Claire, 1996; Woodward, 1992). During the 1980s, among 14 African countries real spending per capita increased slightly by 4.8 percent in health while it declined by 4.6 percent in education. Priorities of countries vary and, while in Nigeria expenditures on health declined by 50 percent and education by 70 percent, they increased in Zimbabwe by 38 percent for health and 31 percent for education (World Bank, 1994). Even in those countries where spending is on the increase, there is a continuous tendency to bias towards secondary and tertiary services, which disfavour the
poor. To help reduce costs many African governments have introduced user charges for health and education services. For those with low incomes, user charges represent a significant part of the household budget and they have a clear negative effect on the use of these services. During the 1980s school drop out rates, infant mortality rates and vaccination cover worsened throughout Africa as a whole. The sizes of school classes are going up, exam results are deteriorating, and many children, especially girls, drop out of school in order to work in the informal sector (Claire, 1996; Gibbon, 1993). While the gross primary school enrolment rate in Sub-Saharan Africa increased from 46 percent in 1970 to 80 percent in 1980, it decreased again to 69 percent in 1990. The table below shows the decreasing trend in primary school enrolment for males and females.

### Percentage of age group enrolled in primary education in Sub-Saharan Africa

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1980</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1993</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


In health care, community financing, user charges and higher prices on drugs have been introduced and, since the poor tend to have a greater need for health care and at the same time have less resources to finance their own services, these have had an inequitable effect. The use of rural health services has fallen as people turn to traditional medicine (Gibbon, 1992). Furthermore, a reduction in the number of women giving birth in hospitals has been accompanied by an increase in the number of maternal deaths (Claire, 1996).

1.2. POVERTY ALLEVIATION AS A STRATEGY

The study of poverty - its explanations, its incidence and strategies to alleviate, reduce and eradicate it - continues to be a critical activity in development theory and practice. In 1981 Sen commented that "...much about poverty is obvious enough...", but there are different views on what 'poverty' means and they influence strategies designed to tackle it. Estimates may vary, but there is little disagreement that approximately 30% of the population of developing countries live in poverty, with the greatest numbers found in South Asia, Sub-Saharan Africa and Latin America in that order (ILO, 1995). Despite a generation of development strategies supported by international aid agencies, poverty persists in a world which Korten has characterised as one of 'gargantuan excesses and grotesque inequalities (Korten 1996)'. In the past two decades little impact has been made on eradicating or reducing poverty in absolute terms, a 'culture of poverty' is a dominant feature of the lives of millions of families, poverty has become increasingly 'feminized' and the cycle of reproduction of poverty has been largely unbroken in the regions of the world where it is most persistent. There are three basic concepts which are evident in most definitions and understandings of the extent, nature and persistence of poverty:

**Sufficiency:** having (or not having) enough food, income and essential services, as well as non-material needs such as safety and opportunities.
Access: being able (or unable) to acquire sufficient food, income, services and so on. Poverty is, therefore, to do with access to resources and entitlements.

Security: having (or not having) a secure and sustainable access to essential commodities and services. A lack of security increases vulnerability, or the danger of becoming poor. (Alcock, 1993).

Individuals or families are considered to be poor when their ‘level of living’, measured in terms of their income and their consumption, is below what is seen to be an acceptable standard. The most widespread approach is to define a minimum standard or poverty line in absolute terms, below which people cannot sustain their lives. Poverty can also be explained in relative terms, when it refers to an individual’s or family’s position in relation to average income or consumption within a region. Quantitative approaches to the analysis of poverty are essentially static in nature and tend to treat it like a disease whose symptoms can be dealt with by appropriately targeted interventions.

In the past decade, however, the study of poverty as a dynamic process has been greatly influenced by Sen’s (1981) entitlement approach, which focuses on the relationship of people to the resources which they have and the commodities which they require to meet their basic subsistence needs. In Sen’s entitlement analysis, ‘ownership endowments’ (land, labour, welfare rights) can be exchanged for ‘commodity bundles’ (food, services, facilities) through a process of ‘exchange entitlement mappings’ (labour and commodity markets, bureaucratic procedures). Essentially Sen’s approach deals with an individual’s or family’s capability to secure an acceptable standard of living, and this will differ depending on the particular socio-economic context. Poverty alleviation strategies, therefore, are to do with protecting or enhancing an individual or family’s entitlement and capability. This approach was adopted by the World Bank (1990) in its definition of poverty as ‘the inability to attain a minimal standard of living’.

Strategies to tackle poverty have been a feature of international development efforts since the wave of independence and the emergence of post-colonial states in the 1960s. In the 1960s modernisation and economic growth became the twin pillars of development strategy but it gradually became apparent that the ‘trickle-down’ would not alleviate endemic poverty and inequalities. Development strategists came to realise that the poverty was structural and that its elimination through development could be a very long-term process. The debate was between those who argued for growth, in the continued expectation that it would influence levels of poverty, and those who argued the need for a structural approach implying a very different strategy. Furthermore the debate took on an international perspective as poverty was explained in terms of the unfavourable and disadvantaged economic position of poor nations in relation to global control and access to resources and the world trading system. In general terms, development was seen as a process whereby poor nations could catch up with their industrialised counterparts and the role of international aid was to plan and manage this process in such a way that it would break the spectre of perpetual poverty.

Since the 1970’s many of the bodies within the United Nations system have come to develop their own distinctive strategies for alleviating poverty. In the early 1970s the ILO’s World Employment Programme, which stressed the link between development strategy and poverty and the crucial influence on levels of poverty of a country’s development objectives, launched an
important line of enquiry. In the late 1970s the FAO took up the issue of rural poverty, convened the World Conference of Agrarian Reform and Rural Development and began to actively promote strategies designed to tackle its structural causes (FAO, 1980). This work began to suggest what might be the key elements in development strategies designed to tackle poverty:

* enabling poor households to have access to productive assets and employment opportunities
* increasing the productivity of the labour and assets of poor households
* providing adequate access to a range of basic services
* providing systems of protection for the economically and socially weak
* providing safety nets for households which cannot produce enough to survive or escape from poverty
* enabling poor households to live in a situation of law and order

The major issue in the 1980’s became how far structural adjustment programmes would either improve or reduce the ability of national development strategies to tackle poverty. While the evidence would suggest that structural adjustment programmes have led to an increase in poverty in many situations, the long-term issue is whether such programmes can bring about the structural changes required to have a more permanent impact. The 1980s have come to be seen as the ‘lost decade’ in development terms for many of the world’s poorer countries and the evidence is yet to emerge whether the common denominator of that decade - structural adjustment- has built the basis for future sustainable growth and corresponding reduction in poverty.

In the 1990’s several major initiatives within the UN system have given new importance to the issue of poverty. These initiatives constituted what Lipton and Maxwell (1992) called the ‘New Poverty Agenda’ which they present as the ‘new wisdom’ following in the wake of the failure of a range of strategies since the 1950s. In 1990 the World Bank’s World Development Report dealt centrally with the issue of poverty. The report showed how some countries had succeeded in reducing poverty and laid out a broad strategy for others to follow. This strategy has two main elements:

1. economic growth with expanding employment and income-earning opportunities especially for the poor, by improving the macro-economic and sectoral policy framework and facilitating the development of a broadly based private sector.
2. enhancing the ability of poor people to respond to the opportunities presented and improving their access to health services, education and other social infrastructure.

The World Bank Report emphasised the comprehensive nature of poverty alleviation strategies, the importance of safety nets to provide essential security for those severely affected by policy reform and the need to undertake periodic poverty assessments to ensure that strategies were appropriately focused and relevant. In 1992 the UNDP proposed a strategy of poverty eradication built around the concept of Sustainable Human Development. This strategy has four main areas of focus: promotion of jobs and sustainable livelihoods, the advancement of women, environmental preservation and regeneration and good governance. Later in 1996 the UNDP launched its ‘Poverty Strategy Initiative’ which was intended to help countries to formulate and strengthen national plans which would address the structural causes of poverty. Finally, in 1995 the ILO completed an extensive period of research into the contribution of the concept of social exclusion to current understandings of poverty and argued that poverty and social exclusion were indistinguishable (ILO, 1995).
These three recent initiatives have heralded a noticeable shift in the thinking behind strategies of poverty alleviation by arguing that some form of broad, popular involvement or participation could be crucial to the successful outcome of such strategies. More commonly reference is made to the notion of ‘civil society’ or other forms of citizen organisation which could serve as the vehicle for this participation. Developing thinking and practice in the 1990s could be said to be strongly influenced by the concept of ‘participation’ and by perspectives which, at both the macro-political and micro--operational levels, seek to promote wider popular participation. While the origins of a ‘participatory approach’ and its attendant practice could be traced back to the 60s and while it has long been vigorously adopted as a basic principle at the grass-roots by NGOs, it is only recently that it has become common currency among international aid agencies working in poverty alleviation.

In 1979 the World Conference on Agrarian Reform and Rural Development (WCARRD) argued that national progress based on growth with equity and participation required a redistribution of economic and political power (FAO, 1980). In 1983 Chambers described the key issue of involvement (voice) of poor people in the determination of survival strategies; and in 1985 El Ghonemy’s seminal work on the dynamics of rural poverty underlined the central role that people can play in the definition and implementation of poverty alleviation strategies. Furthermore, an International Symposium on Rural Poverty in 1987 called for strategies which enable the rural poor ‘to actively participate’ in order to influence the decisions and forces which affect their lives (Oakley 1987). And, in 1989 Tendler, in a review of poverty alleviation programmes, concluded that the active participation of the poor is central to their ability to increase incomes. Such studies and the growing strengthening of a ‘participatory approach’ in poverty analysis and programme design, have resulted in a wide recognition of the increasing relevance of ‘participation’ in strategies to alleviate and eradicate poverty. In this respect, participation can be viewed from two distinct but complementary perspectives:

1. At the macro level in the sense of democratic participation in the political systems and processes by which public policies are determined and priorities determined. This has led to debates concerning the relationship between different political systems and the creation of an ‘enabling environment’ in which people feel able to actively participate. At this level people’s participation could be influential in creating a political base for effective anti-poverty action and for energising representative organisations as a counterbalance to the powerful state. If poverty is to be understood in structural terms, then a climate of critical democratic participation might push established interests in the direction of necessary reforms. (World Bank, 1993a; Oxfam, 1993; ILO, 1996).

2. At the programme and project level in terms of direct beneficiary participation in design and implementation. Although the degree and the nature of participation may differ according to the focus of the programme, the common argument is that beneficiary participation leads to more successful and sustainable programmes.

While the above issues and perspectives have not coalesced into a universally relevant participatory poverty alleviation strategy, a number of lines of enquiry or action are beginning to emerge which give the strategy some shape. These include: (i) the decentralisation of functions and resources to local government thus strengthening the accountability of local leaders to programme beneficiaries; (ii) the development of local level organisations of the rural and
urban poor as a basic means of their participation; (iii) the direct targeting of productive assets (e.g. credit) at the poor in order to enable them to build a minimum economic base from which they can begin to play more active roles in development; (iv) donor-led pressure for macro-level reforms and economic and political ‘rules, customs and procedures’, in favour of the poor (Lipton, 1994); (v) the direct involvement of the poor in poverty assessment, thus enabling a more authentic and relevant determination of trends and priorities; and (vi) increasing reference to the role that NGOs could play in poverty alleviation strategies (Riddell and Robinson, 1995). Many of these strands of thinking and action came together in the UNDP’s (1995) recent work on a Policy Framework for Country Poverty Eradication Strategies, in which centrality is given to the notion of empowerment and to the creation of an ‘enabling environment’ which would promote the non-discriminatory and equitable access of the poor to the productive assets vital to their own survival, security, and ultimately, development. People need the power in order to effect the change necessary to create a structural environment more conducive to meaningful poverty alleviation strategies.

1.3. THE CONCEPT OF PARTICIPATION IN DEVELOPMENT

A re-focusing of development strategies in the mid-1970s led to the emergence of the concept of ‘people’s participation’ and an increasing recognition of a need for development strategies which were not primarily capital-centred but which sought to include people more directly in developing processes. In the past fifteen years or so this re-focusing has grown into a major and substantial influence on developing thinking and practice. It could be argued that currently these are greatly influenced by notions of participation and by efforts to radically reform still dominant structuralist approaches to development policy; that is, programmes and projects which are more concerned with formal planned development interventions with expected outcomes along predictable directions. But the search for ‘more participation’ has not been without its controversies and disagreements. In the 1970s and early 1980s the debate was concerned with how to facilitate access to and participation in development processes, in the broadest sense and at different levels, on the part of groups, communities, regions and nations previously excluded from such access. More recently the emphasis has come to be placed on the notion of participatory development’ or how to make development programmes and projects more ‘participatory’ and thus more likely to achieve their expected outcomes (Galjart, 1982; Ghai, 1988; Rahman, 1993; Stiefel and Wolfe, 1994; World Bank, 1994).

While there would appear to be substantial evidence in favour of a more ‘participatory’ style of development intervention and while the term ‘participatory’ is now almost automatically added on to any intended development practice (participatory extension, participatory planning, participatory monitoring, and so on) there is still a fundamental divergence of opinion as to the purpose, nature and outcome of this participatory style. This divergence could be illustrated by the following two statements:

(i) Community Participation is an active process by which beneficiary or client groups influence the direction and execution of a development project, with a view to enhancing their well being in terms of income, personal growth, self-reliance and other values they cherish (Paul, 1987).
(ii) Participation is concerned with the organised efforts to increase control over resources and regulative institutions in given social situations on the part of groups and movements of these hitherto excluded from such control (Pearse and Stiefel, 1979).

Participant Development

Paul’s statement could be seen as encapsulating the notion of participatory development in terms of the planning and implementation of programmes and projects, and it has become an almost compulsory and fundamental operating principle of projects funded by development assistance. All development initiatives and interventions must not only be sensitive to the needs and responses of the people they are supposed to benefit but they should also seek to actively promote local people’s participation in the different stages of the project cycle. Operationally the principle has to be adjusted both to the demands of the intervention and the characteristics of the local context. Essentially, however, development continues to be seen as an externally initiated and formulated intervention but with varying degrees of local people’s participation with the intention of creating a sense of ownership and of seeking to ensure the future sustainability of such initiatives. People’s participation in externally formulated and policy-driven development projects could be said to be a ‘good thing’. It results in projects which are more efficient in their use of scarce external resources and more effective in terms of being more integrated into local ideas, skills and resources. Further it can result in a wider coverage and impact of project benefits if local people can assume some responsibility and provide resources for its spread. Positively participation is such projects can also help to develop the capacity and abilities of local people to engage in development activities and, at the same time, it can help to strengthen the status of women if, as a result of the project’s activities, they are brought into local level discussions and decision-making.

In contrast, critics of an over-emphasis on people’s participation in development projects point to the cost and time involved in what is potentially a lengthy and inconclusive process and are sceptical of the added value that participation can contribute to project outcome (UNICEF, 1990; Oakley, 1991; OECD 1994). Participatory development is essentially a technique, an instrument and a means whereby development policy can be implemented. It has the potential to develop skills and knowledge and to strengthen local capacity, but essentially it is at best an act of collaboration and consultation, and at worst, an exercise in co-option. Participation is usually limited to the parameters of the development project and its fundamental purpose is in terms of securing project impact; the sustainability of the development which has been generated. For some the participation is direct in the form of tangible, targeted benefits; for others it is merely nominal with little real sense of ownership or the transfer of authority. More severe critics argue that participatory development ‘shifts the burden’ of national development of the shoulders off existing political and economic elites onto those of the poor. Participatory development may be ‘good’ for the designers of development but, as a technique, it does little to address the structural cause of people’s poverty.

Participation in Development

Pearse and Stiefel’s (1979) statement was the working definition of a major UNRISD enquiry into participation which ran through most of the 1980’s and concluded with Stiefel and Wolfe’s book in 1994. In this understanding participation is not seen as an input into development projects but as a process which should be at the core of all development interventions. People
are poor because they are ‘excluded’ and do not have the political and economic power to influence the forces which affect their livelihoods. Participation, therefore, is the process whereby such people achieve influence and are able to negotiate access to the resources which can help them sustain and improve their livelihoods. Development implies negotiation and not merely the implementation of predetermined policy. In this analysis participation involves control, ownership and a sense of the empowerment of previously powerless people. It implies a notion of participation not limited to the parameters of a development project, but participation in a more democratic and representative sense. Participation becomes an instrument of change and not merely project implementation, it is adversarial in nature and it seeks to give a voice to those previously excluded from crucial development decisions. In the context of development projects, participation becomes an explicit and ultimate goal and not merely a technique to facilitate project performance (Galjart, 1981; Friedmann, 1992; Rahman, 1993; Jackson 1996).

Such a radical and transformative notion of participation inevitably draws criticism from more policy and results oriented practitioners. Boots (1995) talks of the ‘primacy of ideological fervour’ which surrounds much of the structuralist interpretation of participation in relation to the pragmatic and tangible needs of poor people. The relevance of participation in situations of poverty is also questioned; where livelihoods are both insecure and threatened, concrete and targeted action is more critical than structural discourse. In terms of a conventional project cycle, participation is seen as being impossible to monitor or measure and thus not justifying expenditure; furthermore, unpredictable and unmanageable participation can not only destabilise the whole project cycle but also the status quo and the accepted order of things. Participation should be judged in terms of its contribution to substantive goals and not merely because it may generate a sense of well-being among the people (Picciotto, 1992).

Current Issues

Participation has become a dominant theme in current development practice and it has spawned a whole new genre of projects across the sectors. Most of the major development agencies have taken the rhetoric on board and many have made explicit statements of policy; for example the World Bank (1994). At the project level participatory practice is widespread, if less convincing and transformative than its meaning implies, and a whole new range of techniques built around the concept of PRA (Participatory Rural Appraisal) has unleashed a surge of enthusiasm at the project level (Chambers, 1991; Burkey, 1993). Therefore, any understanding or interpretation of the term participation must take into account the two broad contexts within which the concept is relevant to development:

(i) Participation in the democratic sense of people’s rights to participate in national political processes and decision-making. This understanding lays emphasis upon pluralist political systems which promote participation not just in purely electoral terms, but also via the organisations, structure and movements which could be called ‘civil society’. Important instruments of this form of participation are policies of decentralisation or deconcentration and the recognition of people’s rights of free association. In the current debate upon participation, reference is often made to the political context within which the process seeks to flourish and the crucial role of participation in both legitimising Government action and also in ensuring ‘good governance’ which, it is argued, is the bedrock upon which development strategy should be based (Stiefel and Wolfe, 1994; IILS, 1995).
(ii) Participation in an operational sense and one which is directly linked to a concrete development intervention. The development project cycle is still dominated by a structuralist approach to the implementation of development policy which is pursued in a linear fashion and is predicated upon expected outcomes. Currently the major challenge is to turn this practice around and to see negotiation, and not imposition as the key to project implementation (Jackson, 1996). Meaningful participation in projects cannot be seen as an input or results-driven; it is a fundamental operating principle which should dictate the project’s nature and evolution. In this respect the development worker, and his or her ability to authentically promote participation, becomes a critical actor (Kaplan, 1996). Effective participation in development projects can help to build a base for a wider and more sustainable people’s participation in development but only if it seeks to empower and not merely to use this participation to facilitate the achievement of results. The crucial question, therefore, is whether a participatory form of development project intervention can rise above the short term demands of results and sustainability and be instrumental over time in constructing a resource and skills base from which the poor and excluded can negotiate access to the further resources they require to both sustain and improve their livelihoods?

In conclusion, attempts to define the concepts of ‘participation’ and ‘participatory development’ have been marked by disagreement and controversy, and most discussions find it necessary to refer to wider questions of the nature, role and relationships of the state and civil society. This is particularly so in the contemporary discourses on participation which, whether coming from a neo-liberal or populist direction, tend to be marked by a sustained normative critique of the state and a corresponding valorisation of civil society. In this respect any examination of the concept within an African context must examine the historical background and context of current efforts to promote wider popular participation.

1.4. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND TO PEOPLE’S PARTICIPATION IN AFRICA

This section will provide a brief analytical account of the history of the relationship between the state and civil society in Sub-Saharan Africa as a way of contextualising what might be called a history of participation. This is necessary because a dominant characteristic of recent discussion of African society and politics has been the identification of a process of suppression or exclusion of civil society by an over-extended and authoritarian state and a consequent loss of legitimacy. The present advocacy of ‘rolling back the state’, of democratisation, decentralisation and participation, are widely seen as a means both of (re)empowering civil society and also of allowing states to regain legitimacy.

Abrahamsson and Nilsson (1995) have made a useful distinction between traditional society and civil society in an African context in order to indicate a difference between the sets of norms and organisational forms controlling production and the distribution of resources between pre-industrial, pre-colonial societies and those characterised by the predominance of market economies. In this perspective there is no clear transition or break between the two forms of civil society. Thus the basis for forms of association and organisation, whether for survival or longer term political and economic strategies, may rest in one or both forms of society and culture. As Chazan et al (1988) have noted, this leads to a complex and multi-layered range of forms of association and identity, running from indigenous political and cultural institutions with deep
historical roots through to professional associations, unions, employers organisations, women's and youth groups and NGOs. The challenge to a centralised, authoritarian state or the response to conditions of material uncertainty and poverty may thus find its roots both in a search for the reaffirmation of the past and in the attempt to create more 'modern' forms of political, social and economic association.

The colonial period

Any analysis of the nature of the post-colonial state in Sub-Saharan Africa requires a recognition of its specific characteristics. One common characterisation emerging from neo-marxist analysis has been that of the 'over-developed or 'over-determined' state (Alavi, 1972; Mamdani, 1976; Saul, 1979). This view, stressing the dominance of the metropolitan state and capital and the absence of a strong indigenous (national) elite, sees an apparently powerful, centralised colonial state apparatus acting as a substitute for market mechanisms and creating (pre)conditions for insertion into a capitalist, market economy. A key problem for the colonial state was governance in the sense that, as an externally imposed institution, it had little legitimacy amongst the indigenous population. In addition, as the essential administrative and control framework was managed by a small staff of European administrators, a major problem was always how to administer effectively at a local level. Accordingly, most colonial powers recognised early on the need for indigenous involvement, the establishment of a community of 'loyal' elites who could both play subordinate political and administrative roles in the infrastructure created by the colonial state and thus lend legitimacy to the colonial state.

A major dilemma of colonial rule was that, while local government was seen as the preserve of recognisably indigenous institutions, these also had to be used for the purposes of economic and social transformation (development). In attempting to achieve both aims, the colonial state created a situation in which large sections of both traditional and civil society among the indigenous population came to reject this form of institutionalised participation. The process of identifying and coopting indigenous elites often lead to a major reorganisation of local political systems (Hailey 1950; Iliffe, 1979). This in turn lead to the creation of a neo-traditional elite and an accretion of its power (Channock, 1978). Then as Native Authorities became increasingly associated with economic development initiatives, as they became a conveyor belt for the modernising drive of the late colonial state, sections of traditional society (especially the 'peasantry') turned against them (Crummey, 1986; Sweet, 1982; Clegg and Harding, 1985). Within the more 'modern' civil society, those involved in the formation of political associations looking to independence rejected what they saw as a paternalistic and manipulative system that perpetuated the separation and the subordination of the indigenous population. They identified the neo-traditional elites who staffed the Native Authorities as agents of the colonial state.

Another experience of institutionalised participation in the colonial period needs to be noted. This is community development, through which the late colonial state sought to involve local people in the process of economic and social change. First scouted in 1948 (Great Britain, 1948), it came to be enthusiastically promoted by the British Colonial Office, describing it as:

"... a movement designed to promote better living for the whole community with the active participation and if possible on the initiative of the community but if this initiative is not forthcoming spontaneously by the use
of techniques for arousing and stimulating it in order to secure its active and enthusiastic response to the movement." (Great Britain, 1958).

However, as MacPherson has argued, in the context of colonial underdevelopment, community development was, at best, paternalistic but more frequently "a cynical device by which people could, by their own efforts, be more fully incorporated into the new social and economic formations of externally-oriented economic growth (MacPherson, pp.165, 1982)". Similar criticisms have noted that references to participation and the development of self-reliant communities could not disguise the realities of power where policies and plans were initiated at national level and filtered down to the local level via the community development officer and extension services. (Brokensha and Hodge, 1969).

The post-colonial period

Despite the transfer of liberal democracy, enshrined in independence period constitutions, many ex-colonies in Sub-Saharan Africa witnessed the rapid demise of multi-partyism and the emergence of single party or military rule. For many commentators, especially those within the dominant modernisation paradigm, this was not necessarily a hindrance to development. Lipset (1959) argued that economic development was the pre-condition for and the main driving force behind democratisation. Others (eg Apter, 1963) claimed that uneven internal development and lack of homogeneity might mean that single party, authoritarian rule was more conducive to national unity, stability, growth and modernisation. Geertz (1963), in a more pessimistic vein, noted that the 'primordial loyalties' characteristic of traditional society could undermine attempts to build a modern political and administrative system. The prevalence of neo-Keynesian interventionism gave additional ideological and theoretical support to the concept of the developmental state in which the state was seen as a major economic actor, needing the power and authority to undertake major economic and social transformations.

However by the 1980s it had become abundantly clear that, despite its inheritance of a powerful armoury of intervention mechanisms from the colonial state and their consolidation in the post-independence period, the post-colonial state was finding it difficult to prevent political secession, the rampant development of a parallel economy, and could not effectively implement policy. In short, it was failing to meet expected growth targets, let alone tackle poverty, and had lost legitimacy. A number of commentators (eg Hyden, 1980 and 1983) argued that the post-colonial state was in fact 'weak' and that, because it was not articulated with civil society, it was unable to maintain its immediate post-independence legitimacy or to develop hegemony. More recent analysis has sought to use the concepts of patrimonialism and prebendalism to explain the strategies of post-independence elites in relation to the problem of legitimacy (Healey and Robinson, 1992). Chabal (1994) has argued that elites sought to gain and maintain legitimacy through providing access, via patron-client networks, to the major economic resources vested in or controlled by the state. In this view politics is about competition for access to resources and an ability to use the rewards (jobs, contracts) for personal advancement and servicing patron-client networks. Indeed it has been argued that the state was effectively 'privatised' by this process. Bayart (1993) holds that this represents a prolongation of pre-colonial African political processes, briefly interrupted by colonialism, and argues in a similar vein to Hyden (1983) that the classic distinction between political and civil society is not clearly made in such a situation. A frequent point has been that patrimonialism undermines both the state and the pursuit of
rational development policies by eroding the independence of the bureaucracy and promoting the misallocation of resources to service patron-client networks. Much of the concern with 'good government' has been centred round the perceived need to develop a political culture that is not only more open but more conducive to rational and effective development administration.

The thrust of this analysis is that any attempt to define civil society in Sub-Saharan Africa should not just be content with identifying what forms of association ('traditional' or 'modern') fill the space between the state and the family. Rather it should be based on its growing exclusion from and, hence, potential opposition to the state. As we have seen, colonialism set about trying to separate civil society and political society, which had interpenetrated in pre-colonial society and had attempted to capture, sideline or abolish more traditional forms of identity and relationship. This process was continued after independence by elites who wished to continue the project of modernisation and, through the state, impose hegemony on civil society. As the state became more extensive and pervasive, both traditional and civil society became more and more excluded, disenfranchised, powerless.

This does not mean that civil society, in its traditional or modern forms, ceased to exist. Indeed the failure of the post-colonial state to fulfil its commitment to economic development and increasing political participation has lead to a crisis of legitimacy (Samudavanija, 1991) which has given a powerful impetus to the growth of civil society. However it needs to be recognised that the dimensions and nature of civil society vary quite widely within Sub-Saharan Africa. Alongside the partial emergence of a civil society recognisable in European or North American terms, there are many more forms of self-organisation which are rooted in traditional society and draw their legitimacy from this source. Indeed it has been argued that the renaissance of such forms may provide a more solid foundation for the development of civil society than those based in the activities of urban elites (Abrahamsson and Nilsson, 1995).

1.5. PARTICIPATION AND REFORM IN AFRICA IN THE 1990s

The 1980s marked a watershed for African development. As a result of the international debt crisis and the pressures for macro-economic structural adjustment, the international aid community switched much of its support from long-term sustainable economic development into more general fiscal support and into providing short-term relief to those most adversely affected by the reforms (Abrahamsson and Nilsson, 1995). The initial medicine was a programme of stabilisation, which increasingly in the 1980s gave way to programmes of structural adjustment with an emphasis upon the social dimension of such programmes and support for the more vulnerable. Stabilisation and structural adjustment policies, particularly in Sub-Saharan Africa, and their impacts have been widely researched (World Bank, 1989; Tarp, 1993; Cornia et. al., 1992). A World Bank report in 1994 concluded that there had been some improvement in the overall policy environment in the twenty nine countries that embarked on adjustment programmes in the mid-80s, but that improvements had been far from uniform across countries and sectors (World Bank, 1994). Tarp (1993) shared the above conclusion but suggested that adjustment policies in most Sub-Saharan African countries would only lead to sustainable economic recovery if fundamental reforms took place in their political systems.
After a decade of adjustment policies, three key issues would appear to dominate the agenda for Africa’s development in the immediate future; (i) the improving design and the eventual outcomes of adjustment policies, particularly in relation to their potential to markedly improve the life chances of the absolute poor; (ii) the nature and continuing levels of external support which crucially will provide the resources for sustained growth, and (iii) democratisation processes which can lead to the framing of domestic policies more conducive to growth with equality and to ensuring greater accountability. These three key issues should be seen against the background of a general consensus that the reforms of the 1980s and early 90s have not been able to achieve the kinds of structural reforms which are seen as vital to the continent’s longer term development (Jespersen, 1992; Brown, 1995). Already in the late 1980’s the ECA was warning that continuous and substantial international support would be required if the adjustment process was not to have a negative impact on growth, living standards, social development and political stability (ECA, 1989). However, in their review of adjustment in seven African countries, Husain and Faruqee (1996) concluded that, wherever adjustment policies have been pursued vigorously, results have been positive but that stability, continuity and predictability are keys to sustaining the progress. Others argue that, while there may have been improvements in economic output and levels of poverty, the social effects of adjustment in terms of the ability of households to look after their members and sustain their standard of living has been dramatic (Claire, 1996).

The 1990’s have also seen a strengthening of the argument for the ‘democratization’ of development processes in Africa, for Government and institutional reform and for conditions of ‘good governance’ as a prerequisite of success in economic adjustment (Mkandawire, 1992; Stewart et. al. 1992). In an historical review of the previous three decades, Barrat Brown (1995) concluded that the majority of African people have been excluded from any significant contribution to the determination of national development. If colonial Africa was characterised by popular participation in nationalist coalitions to win political independence, the post-colonial history of African countries has witnessed the rapid and systematic exclusion of the people as a whole from the political arena (Nyong’o, 1990). Participation was seen as inimical to modernisation and stability, necessary conditions for development. However, in the late 80s and early 90s the chorus grew for a greater democratisation of development processes in Africa. The processes of structural adjustment in the 1980’s have led to increasing pressure for reforms of the state, for greater legitimacy and for more government accountability. Undoubtedly these pressures have begun to have some influence in terms of Government’s willingness to negotiate and to examine the structures of Government control.

The adjustment process has also brought in its wake demands for institutional reform, for greater decentralisation, for a rejection of strict dirigiste policies, and for a more widespread commitment to popular participation. These demands have been supported by international donors and by an insistence upon more widespread accountability and ‘good governance’ as the preconditions to successful economic adjustment (Cornia et. al., 1992). In the early 1990’s the difficult balance which many African nations were facing was that between the demands of structural reforms, the desperate need for growth and the mounting pressures for greater popular participation. Tarp (1993) observed that popular participation in the implementation of adjustment programmes was more crucial than was realised:
"Only through mass participation will the greater confidence of the people in their society and government, as well as the needed commitment to development come about." (Tarp, 1993: 165).

In the 1990’s in Africa there is a crisis of political authority with pressures for increasing political liberalisation. The essential mood, however, is conservative as the continent’s small middle class cling to the state and its apparatus to protect the status quo. In this aspect Adeyemi’s (1990) assertion that Africa’s crisis is a crisis of participation is apposite, and it is an assertion supported by Shaw (1990) who saw the crucial role of popular participation in helping to keep the state more ‘honest’. The 1990’s in Africa have heralded the debate on political authority and mounting pressures for political liberalisation but within a context in which the enthusiasm for such reforms on the part of dominant political elites is doubtful.

The first major demand for great popular participation in Africa’s political and development processes was made at the International Conference on the Challenge of Economic Recovery and Accelerated Development, held at Abuja, Nigeria in 1987. The ensuing Abuja statement called for "new political perspectives" as the basis for setting in motion the process of African progress. The statement argued that greater democratisation of African society and increased accountability of those entrusted with power were prerequisites of greater popular participation (ECA, 1987). In 1988 The Khartoum Conference on the Human Dimension of Africa’s Economic Recovery and Development continued the momentum of Abuja and echoed its sentiments with respect to the need for the greater democratisation of African political systems. Both Abuja and Khartoum are seen as precursors to the 1990 Arusha Workshop on the Role of Popular Participation in Meeting the Challenges of Recovery and Development in Africa. This workshop was a major initiative and step-forward in promoting the basis of popular participation in Africa’s development. The tone of this Workshop was set by the opening declaration of the then ECA Executive Secretary:

"Africa needs fundamental change and transformation, not just adjustment. The change and transformation required are just narrow, economistic and mechanical ones. They are the broader and fundamental changes that will bring about, over time, the new Africa of our vision where there is development and economic justice, not just growth; where there is democracy and accountability not despotism and authoritarianism; and where the governed and their governments are moving hand in hand in the promotion of the common good, and where it is the will of the people, rather than the wishes of one person or a group of persons, however powerful, that prevails. " (Adeyemi, 1990)

The Workshop was suitably inspired and proceeded to proclaim the African Charter for Popular Participation in Development and Transformation. This Charter asserts the fundamental role of popular participation in generating the support necessary to overcome the economic crises. It called for an 'opening up' of political processes to accommodate freedom of opinions, to tolerate differences and to ensure the effective participation of the people and their organisation and associations. The Charter further spells out a whole series of actions to be undertaken by Governments, People's Organisations and NGOs in order to "facilitate effective popular participation in societal and economic life" (ECA, 1990). The Charter was ringingly endorsed by the Workshop and the ECA was 'empowered' to monitor progress.

In the mid-1990s evidence of the greater democratisation of the African polity, while noticeable in the apparently increasing acceptance of political pluralism, is less convincing in terms of
development processes, the diffusion of political power and the restructuring of the State. Popular participation entails opening up the political space, democratically, to the broad mass of the people and ensuring that the institutions set up for the purpose of exercising political power and public-authority are people-based and subject to popular control. As long as Africa is economically underdeveloped, is it doomed to authoritarian rule or can popular participation transform the mentality and the acceptance of this authoritarian rule and create the basis for a more people-led and egalitarian development? Or do the demands of stability and the needs of economic modernisation still prelude the opening up of Africa's political systems and the widening of access to its development policies and resources to its millions of rural and urban poor?
Chapter 2 - CASE STUDIES OF PARTICIPATION AND POVERTY ALLEVIATION

In this chapter we present synopses of five case studies on Participation and Poverty Alleviation which were undertaken by local consultants in their respective countries or regions. The studies were done at different times between late 1995 and early 1997 and were selected both to cover different geographical regions of Sub-Saharan Africa and different dimensions and aspects of the process of participation. Collectively they reflect the range of current policy and practice of implementing participation both at the national and the programme and project level. In terms of content, the case studies have followed a broadly similar framework of analysis which has made cross-referencing possible and has allowed us to draw some general conclusions. Each of the case studies is a substantial text in its own right, in this chapter we include only a synopsis sufficient to give the reader a 'feel' for the study and to provide enough information to show how they contribute to the overall study's conclusions. In Section 3 of Chapter 3 we provide a more general overview of the findings of the case studies in the context of a wider analysis of the issues of participation and poverty alleviation.

2.1. POVERTY AND PARTICIPATORY DEVELOPMENT IN CAMEROON: THE IMPACT OF COOPERATIVE REFORM IN CAMEROON ON PEASANT ORGANISATIONS IN THE COCOA ZONE

Pierre Njouyep

From independence until 1986 Cameroon experienced a period of relative prosperity under a system in which the state played a major role in guiding and financing agricultural cooperatives. The subsequent period of economic crisis witnessed a fall in the purchasing power of the population, an increase in poverty and the financial failure of several state agencies in the agricultural sector. The period of state intervention saw an underutilisation of natural and human resources, marked by a lack of interest among peasant associations in longer term development strategies. Responding to external pressures, the state engaged in a programme of structural reforms which, in the rural sector involved a rationalisation of commercial circuits and credit mechanisms. Furthermore, the increased involvement of NGOs was encouraged. This study, which was carried out between August and September 1995, examines the impact of liberalisation, the efforts to increase the level of participation of peasant farmers and the effects of this on incomes and levels of living in the Central and Southern Provinces and the Department of Sanaga Maritime.

The 1992 law and the establishment of associations and cooperatives

In the area concerned, some 3,538 cooperatives and Groupes d'Initiative Commune (GICs) were registered at the time of the study. Of these, 46% were involved in food crop production, 30% in cocoa production and stock rearing played a significant part in the rest. Some 60% of these associations had 10 or less members, 21% had over 20 members. At a rough estimate, membership covered around 40% of the peasant farmers in the area. In 1992 the new law on cooperatives and GICs was also introduced but due to administrative difficulties registrations did not pick up until 1994. There was, however, evidence that many of the GICs were established by local elites wishing to take advantage of the economic and financial possibilities created by
the new law. One of the aims of this study was to ascertain how many of these associations have a concrete existence on the ground.

Despite a legal requirement, very few cooperatives and GICs (2% in the Province du Sud, 0% in the Province du Centre) had lodged their activity or financial reports with the registration services. This meant that it was impossible to analyse turnover and profits or how long they had remained in existence. Also the great majority of the smaller coops and GICs (those with 10 or less members) were formed by members of the same family or neighbours in the same village and several had overlapping memberships. There were also many cases of several GICs operating in the same sector in the same village. Inevitably questions arise as to whether many registrations had been made merely in order to take advantage of access to funds. Indeed at the time of the study, FUNDAOR (the body charged with funding cooperatives and GICs) had suspended funding for all registered groups. Of all the peasant associations registered only 4% were cooperatives or unions and federations of GICs, as opposed to individual GICs. The small number of cooperatives may have been as a result of their history of poor performance, whilst the small number of unions and federations of GICs (30 in the Provinces du Centre et du Sud) may have reflected the relative recency of the formation of the individual GICs. Given the potential role of unions and federations in promoting the marketing of produce and developing credit systems, their slow development gives cause for concern.

Before the new law of 1992, the majority of peasant associations were rooted in traditions of mutual aid and tended to be focused on helping to meet the costs of non-economic activities (eg funerals and marriages). With liberalisation and the new law there is an expectation that they will give priority to productive activities. Before the 1992 law the State played a major role in the management and financial control of cooperatives and the training of members. This tended to inhibit local initiative, reduce the interest of peasants and, with the consequent failure of many cooperatives, lead to a disruption of the market. The aim of the new law and structures is to encourage greater local participation and avoid these problems. Under the old system state agencies played a major role in the market by determining the quality of cocoa and the prices for different qualities. Since liberalisation GICs are increasingly making their own distinctions of quality and auctioning their produce to the highest bidder. Whilst 50-60% of planters are now marketing through GICs in this way, the prices obtained are only some 10-20% higher than for individual sales. From evidence that the prices obtained by producers represent only 60% of the FOB price, it would appear that significant profits are being made further along the market chain. To counter this, the GICs need to have better information on the evolution of prices in the international cocoa market.

An added obstacle to increasing the voice of producers is their minority (20%) representation on the Comité Interprofessionnel Café-Cacao (CICC). The majority are representatives of processing plants, transporters and marketing organisations. Due to a decline in market prices and increased competition there has also been a fall in the quality of cocoa from Cameroon which lead to a 30% drop in price on the London market over a four month period in 1995. Exporters have claimed that the quality of cocoa marketed by GICs is lower than that of individual sellers, partially due to their practice of stocking beans in the hope of achieving a higher price. This has reduced the credibility of GICs.
Impact of Economic Liberalisation

At present it is too early to evaluate the long term impact of economic liberalisation on the incomes of planters, especially as it was followed almost immediately by the devaluation of the Cfa. Devaluation lead to an automatic doubling of prices and farmers responded by increasing production by some 60% between 1993/4 and 1994/5 through increased use of insecticides and by bringing marginal land into cultivation. Real incomes rose by between 10-20% in the same period and it would appear that their purchasing power also increased. This can be put against an estimated fall of 70% in the real incomes of civil servants as a result of devaluation. If these positive changes are to be maintained there will be a need to encourage local initiatives, rationalise the market, introduce better quality control, obtain better information on the international market and break the monopoly of middle-men.

With the withdrawal of the State, the potential role of NGOs has increased. Some are already active and rendering useful services but for others, whose aims are less clear, a note of caution is needed. Although an important link, NGOs should restrict themselves to overseeing projects they support and not manage them. Furthermore they should ensure that they have effective evaluation indicators and encourage the participation of peasant organisations in their projects. Finally there is a need to ensure that NGOs learn from each other in terms of personnel training.

At the time of the study the newly restructured SODECAO (State and Externally Financed Marketing Board and Extension Agency), had not paid its staff for three months. It does not appear to have the material or human resources to train and support the GICs, and there must be doubts about its financial and organisational capacity both to act as a purchasing and an extension agency. Furthermore, an analysis of the expenditure of FONDAOR in the Province du Sud indicated that some two thirds had been devoted to helping the process of registration of peasant organisations and only 15% on extension services. The situation was similar in the Province du Centre where registration had, in consequence, been suspended. There is an urgent need to evaluate the work of FONDAOR in order to avoid a further waste of funds. Finally, there were also indications that political parties were attempting to influence cooperatives and GICs.

Conclusion

It is too early to evaluate with any accuracy the impact of the cooperative reform on peasant organisations in the cocoa producing zone. Despite the fashion for setting up a whole range of GICs, there is very little statistical and financial information available. There is, however, evidence that cocoa production and peasant incomes have increased, leading to an alleviation of poverty and diversification into food crops has contributed to local self-sufficiency in food items. However to achieve the aims of the liberalisation reforms, there is need for organisational and financial data on the activities of the cooperatives and GICs. In particular FONDAOR needs to concentrate on developing effective extension services and NGOs must be more responsive to the needs of the rural population. The cooperatives and GICs must progressively take charge of rural credit systems, organise marketing more effectively and raise the quality of their products. If this is done the link between participation and poverty alleviation will be strengthened.
2.2. PARTICIPATION AND URBAN POVERTY ALLEVIATION IN HARARE, ZIMBABWE

G. Keyzer

This study aims to gain information on participatory development and poverty alleviation in urban areas in Zimbabwe after the introduction of the Economic Structural Adjustment Programme (ESAP). One of the important consequences of ESAP has been the removal of social welfare support structures and a major question is whether this has encouraged collective initiatives by grassroots organisations to take over activities formerly undertaken by the State.

Main issues affecting (urban) poverty

A number of issues need to be considered in order to understand the issue of urban poverty in Zimbabwe:

The Land Issue and Growth with Equity

Agriculture is the most important economic activity in the country employing some 80% of the population and 60% of the manufacturing sector depending on it for inputs. Colonial legislation largely confined the indigenous population to the poor ecological regions of the country and the armed independence struggle centred round this issue. After independence the new government chose to treat the land redistribution issue with care so as to keep the confidence of white Zimbabweans and redistribution has proceeded at a slower pace than planned. There are strong arguments for redistribution, including: unemployment and migration to cities, capital and labour resource-use efficiency and food security.

Other aspects of the new government's growth with equity policy envisaged ending racial inequities in employment and in access to health, education and social welfare facilities. Whilst improvements were made, especially in education, the policy was difficult to maintain especially under the adverse economic and climatic conditions of the 1980s and the continuing political instability of the southern African region.

Structural Adjustment

In 1989 the government decided to shift from a controlled to a market oriented economy and initiated the Economic Structural Adjustment Programme (ESAP). Whilst Zimbabwe's ESAP was homegrown rather than imposed from the outside, it contained most of the familiar structural adjustment measures. In view of the anticipated negative effects of ESAP on poorer groups, the government introduced a Social Dimensions of Adjustment Programme in 1991 to soften the social costs and to enable people to take advantage of the changing economic climate. The Social Dimensions Fund (SDF) covered a number of key poverty-related areas: employment and training, targeted food subsidies, exemption from education and health fees for vulnerable groups, monitoring and evaluation. However the SDF is generally regarded as ineffective: it has targeted only retrenches for training and excluded a large proportion of the poor from food, education and health subsidies and it has led to a marked drop in take up of education and health services.
Urban Conditions

Whilst exact data on urban poverty in Zimbabwe are still not available, it is clear that the ESAP has put greater pressure on urban households, reducing real incomes and employment possibilities. The 1991 Income, Consumption and Expenditure Survey indicated a tripling of urban unemployment since the mid 1980s with the situation for women and school-leavers being markedly worse. Other studies indicate that wage increases have lagged behind increases in the cost of living, causing the number of families living below the poverty datum line to rise markedly. A recent report indicated that approximately 46% (1.2 million people) of the urban population were homeless or in illegal squatter settlements. In this situation women, with greater direct responsibility for feeding the family and managing the home, tend to suffer more than men. Female headed households (about 15% of the total) are increasing and are amongst the poorest of all households.

Informal Sector

The post independence government continued the colonial policy of strongly discouraging the informal sector. It has still not been strategically addressed in national policy, partly due to the expectation that post ESAP economic growth was expected to increase formal sector employment. The informal sector has, however, markedly increased in size. It is characterised by a preponderance of individual and family self-employment and the majority of participants are women (67% of the total). Women's activities, in comparison with those of men, are generally smaller in scale, set up with less capital and require a lower skill level. A 1995 ILO SAMAT study identified a number of constraints on the growth and competitiveness of the informal sector. These included the lack of skills, capital, technical equipment and permanent premises which make it difficult to obtain support services or credit; it also pointed to restrictive government policies and regulations. The situation of women as regards credit is even more difficult as they need permission of male family members. The study recommended a range of solutions including: deregulation, greater central and local government coordination to enhance the capacity of local authorities to formulate and implement more supportive policies, promotion of self-help organisations, easier access to credit and training and a special focus on women. These constraints and the recommended solutions will require detailed attention at both national and local levels if the economic participation of the poor through the informal sector is to achieve meaningful reductions in poverty.

The Poverty Alleviation Action Plan (PAAP)

The government of Zimbabwe is implementing a Poverty Alleviation Action Plan, whose strategy covers: empowering beneficiaries through participation and decentralisation, establishing partnerships with NGOS and the private sector, targeting public expenditure on areas most likely to benefit the poor, mobilising popular support, emphasising employment generation rather than welfare and sustainable human development. Donor support for the financial implementation of the plan is still being sought.
NGOs

Seven urban NGOs were included in the study, most of them engaged in activities generating self-employment for marginal groups.

The Self-Employed Women's Association of Zimbabwe (SEWAZ)

Established in 1995 and operating in the high density areas of Harare, SEWAZ aims to organise small business women, mostly vendors, and has been concentrating on awareness-raising workshops.

The Hawkers and Vendors Association of Zimbabwe (HAVAZ)

HAVAZ, which operates across the country, was established in 1993 to organize informal street sellers and negotiate policy changes to improve the trading environment of members, including: the regulatory system, provision of education and training, access to credit and housing.

Zimbabwe Project Trust (ZPT)

ZPT was set up in 1981 to help reintegrate former freedom fighters into civil life. The growing incidence of unemployment has lead to broadening its scope to include the destitute and marginalised who are provided with basic items such as food and clothing and advised on how to develop informal sector projects for which small capital grants are available.

Zimbabwe Women's Bureau (ZWB)

ZWB was set up in 1975 to support women in income generating projects and operates across the country. Major activities include technical, management and organisational skills, literacy, food production and processing, and awareness raising on a range of social development issues.

Zimbabwe Council of Churches (ZCC)

Established in 1964, ZCC is a large organisation consisting of 21 church denominations and 9 affiliated NGOs which act as implementing agencies for ZCC. The overall objective is to reduce poverty in Zimbabwe through developing and supporting community based projects benefitting members of affiliated churches and NGOs.

Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA)

The YWCA was established in Zimbabwe in 1957. Its overall objective is to enable women and girls to become self-reliant. Besides religious activities, there are a broad range of programmes covering practical, business and leadership skills.

Inter Country Peoples' Aid

Established in 1994 to initiate a Mozambican refugee repatriation programme, the organisation later sought to broaden its scope to cover disadvantaged and marginalised women and children.
in both Zimbabwe and Mozambique. One main area of its work has been income generation in the government established squatter camp in Dzivaresekwa, Harare.

All the NGOs interviewed were experiencing major financial difficulties largely due to the decline in donor funding, but also due to the adverse local economic situation. Although some networking is taking place, most NGOs are still competing with each other for donor funds and making their own survival a primary goal. Income generating and skill training programmes are heavily focused on the production and sale of a limited range of commodities which intensifies competition between small producers and vendors. Most of them place less emphasis on influencing changes in the wider policy or economic environment.

Grass-roots initiatives

13 grass-roots based informal sector organisations from the high density suburbs of Harare were interviewed. They included groups involved in production and vending, self-built housing and the improvement of local physical and social amenities. Their membership ranged from 8 to 200 while the majority were registered as cooperatives under the Cooperatives Act. A major reason for forming a group and registering as a cooperative was both to pool individual members’ resources and to achieve increased access to external resources, such as land or premises leased from the City Council or increased ability to apply for loans from financial institutions.

Usually initiatives to form a group come from the members themselves, but support and training is provided by Village Community Workers (VCWs) who are extension workers of the Ministry of National Affairs, Employment Creation and Cooperatives. Many of the groups have received financial and technical assistance from local and international NGOs and bilateral and multilateral donors. Although two of the groups failed, there is evidence that members of most of the other groups have been able to increase their incomes through their activities. Members have also been able to accumulate savings which have been used to improve operating premises or have been invested for eventual house construction or purchase. In some cases extra employment has been generated.

Although registration as a cooperative resolves some problems such as access to land and premises or police harassment, a major constraint on the activities of the groups has been lack of success in borrowing funds from the formal financial sector. This has made it difficult to build on initial donor support by financing the purchase of spares or additional machinery. In addition cooperatives and groups are in competition with each other and with individual informal sector workers. Furthermore, there is little evidence of networking between cooperatives to discuss common interests such as prices, security and transport costs. Greater support in terms of management and leadership skills is required. Thus, although there is much evidence of organised efforts by poor people to improve their lives, the majority of them have been unable to expand or diversify.

Conclusions

A major question underlying this study was how far ESAP has contributed to participatory development by enabling low income groups to organise so that they would be better off than
in the period of dependency on the State. Although some basic and limited initiatives by the poor at the grass-roots have been documented, it is clear that it is difficult for them to participate economically and politically. Whilst many NGOs are trying to address issues related to urban poverty, they are hampered by their inability to network and to develop common strategies in face of declining donor support. The ESAP may have provided opportunities in the formal sector but, despite a policy emphasis on indigenisation of the economy, little has been done for the informal sector. Without effective strategies the sector runs the risk of remaining marginal, characterised by low productivity, low value-added, high competition and low purchasing power of its consumers. The recommendations of the 1995 ILO SAMAT Study, referred to above, provide examples of the type of strategy that could be usefully adopted, especially by government.

2.3. PARTICIPATORY DEVELOPMENT AND THE STRUGGLE AGAINST POVERTY IN AFRICA: A CASE STUDY OF CROSSROADS, A PEASANT MOVEMENT

Mathias Bassene

The objective of this study is to understand the role played by peasant associations in economic development and in raising living standards of their members and the rural population as a whole. It is focused on Exchange Crossroads Ltd. (ECL), a business set up by peasant associations in Senegal, Gambia, Guinea Bissau and Mali. ECL aims to enable peasant associations to participate in economic development through marketing their produce at local, regional and international levels. Gambia, Senegal, Mauretania, Mali, Guinea Bissau and the Guinea Republic are marked by differences in their colonial past and administrative systems. Previous attempts at forms of regional federation have failed and there is still tension between the countries. Recently the demise of one party and military regimes has been accompanied by the rise of multi-partyism and an increasingly active civil society. However, internal political conflicts still persist. Economically the region is heavily dependent on agriculture, while climatic problems and increasing competition in the international market have made it difficult to build strong economies which can both provide for food self-sufficiency and contribute to meeting other social needs.

Peasant associations

Peasant associations were born in the Sahel during the 1970s drought. Faced with a rapid degradation of the natural environment peasants, at the village level, attempted to breathe new life into traditional forms of social solidarity (age groups and tontines for example) with the prime objective of ensuring household food security. First activities included: cultivation of communal land, establishment of cereal banks and the organisation of food distribution. Later, faced by the inability of the State to provide effective solutions to rural development, peasant associations diversified into education, health and the environment. Over time, peasant groups expanded from the village level to form local, regional and national associations and federations. This evolution was made possible by the mobilisation skills of local peasant leaders and the support of local and international NGOs. Many of the mobilisation techniques were inspired by those originally used by state agricultural extension services in Senegal, but stressed traditional
values about work, honesty and mutual aid. The success of peasant associations in Senegal has had a marked influence on similar developments in neighbouring countries.

However, there are some factors which have slowed the development of the peasant movement. The legal rules governing the management structures of peasant associations, whilst having the objective of ensuring democracy and transparency, do not fit easily with traditional rural forms of organisation. They place curbs on the extent to which they can engage in political or commercial, profit-making activities. The geographical spread and diversity of members and the lack of formal means of communication has also hindered the development of accountable management. The withdrawal of state extension services has meant a shortfall in technical skills and knowledge in production and marketing, leading peasant associations to become reliant on NGOs.

Carrefour Des Mouvements Paysans

The Carrefour des Mouvements Paysans (Crossroads or Meeting Point of Peasant Movements) grew out of the experience of the 6S movement (Se Servir de la Saison Seche au Sahel et en Savane) in Senegal in the 1980s and meetings between leaders of peasant associations at a regional level. Following such meetings, representatives from associations in Senegal, Gambia, Mali and Guinea Bissau, met to set up Carrefour at Brikama in Gambia in June 1991. At the same meeting Exchange Crossroads Ltd (ECL) was set up as a marketing organisation. The members of Carrefour are:

FADECBA (Fédération des Associations de Développement Communautaire du Balantacounda). Based in the Kolda region of S. Senegal, founded in 1987, with 1085 members grouped in five peasant unions, FADECBA provided the initial impetus for establishing Carrefour and continues to play a central role, especially in the marketing of cashew nuts.

AFET (Association of Farmers, Educators and Traders). Created in 1988 in Gambia, AFET has some 11,000 members across the country. Despite the vitality of local groups, the size and geographical spread of AFET has created problems of coordination for its urban based management and is in the process of restructuring itself.

TESSITO (Federacao Tessito). Tessito is the most recent member of Carrefour with 6,000 members in 22 villages in the Oio region of Guinea Bissau. Its growth has been supported by the NGO Iglesia de Cristo Agricultura Projeto (ICAP) and by FADECBA whose members belong to the same ethnic group. At present there are stresses between Tessito and ICAP which has been accused of dominating the association.

IEGAS (Inter Entente des Groupements Associés au Senegal). IEGAS was created in 1989 as a federation of ten peasant associations in Senegal and has a broad based developmental focus. Despite early successes, IEGAS ran into difficulties in relation to the lack of marketing and technical skills and the retirement of the original leaders who had played a key part in setting up Carrefour and is undergoing a process of restructuring.

COPAKA (Coordination des Paysans de la Region de Kayes). COPAKA was formed in 1994 by three Malian peasant associations which have worked together in training and lobbying and
run a local radio station. One of the associations, the Union Regionale des Coopératives Agricoles de Kayes (URCAK) was set up by ex-emigrants and has technical skills particularly in production and marketing of gum arabic.

The Carrefour Institute, based in Thies (Senegal), was set up in 1993 by the General Assembly of Carrefour and provides professional and technical support for members in development education and participative research, training in production and management of rural enterprises and training for women in economic and social activities.

Exchange Crossroads Limited

Exchange Crossroads Ltd. (ECL) has its head office in Brikama (Gambia). Its mission is to promote the economic activities of Carrefour and its members by strengthening their capacities in production, marketing and management at local, national and regional levels. Its specific objectives include: employment and income generation, improvement of the quality and quantity of agricultural production through the reinvestment of profits in production and training, increasing competitiveness and facilitating commercial links between members. Funds were initially provided by members and used to explore the possibilities of collective marketing for cashew nuts. The aim has been for ECL to generate its own funds by acting as a marketing agent for its members. The central management of ECL is responsible for all the national branches, exports on the international market, financing of marketing activities and relations with banks and development agencies. In 1995 it employed 18 full time staff and 850 seasonal workers and further expansion is envisaged during the 1996-9 period.

Cashew Nuts

The buying and export of cashew nuts constitutes one of the major activities of ECL. Starting from 100t. in 1992, it marketed over 1000t. of cashew nuts in 1994/5. Thanks to its dominant position in the market, particularly in Senegal, it has had a marked impact on producer prices which rose from 35 fcfa per kg. in 1991 to over 300 fcfa per kg. in 1995. This enabled ECL to distribute 50 million fcfa in 1995 to its partners: collectors, supervisors, unions, peasant associations. Whilst this represented a significant injection of cash into the local economies, it reinforced some of the differences between ECL and its members in terms of the philosophical basis of Carrefour which was founded to reinforce unity and solidarity as much as to increase incomes. Many members are concerned about the monetarisation of relationships within Carrefour and many continue to favour a system of barter where cashew nuts are exchanged for processed rice flour rather receiving cash payments. In 1995 ECL experimented with working on a contractual basis with private clients who were not members of peasant associations. This lead to strong objections from members who felt that ECL, in the pursuit of profitability, was straying from its primary objectives.

Gum Arabic

The region of Kayes in Mali specialises in the production of gum arabic. In its first year of operation with this product, ECL marketed 400t. and, in 1995, was able to inject 300 million fcfa in the area in which COPAKA operates. However, this was followed by a collapse of prices on
the international market. Although this led to a net loss on its activities, ECL has been able to breathe new life into the gum arabic marketing circuits and URCAK has gained new members.

ECL has also been involved in the marketing of palm nuts produced by members in Guinea Bissau and Senegal, and karite and beeswax as well as tam-tams (drums) produced in Gambia. However, it has had little success in marketing fresh fruits (such as mangoes) due to their perishability and the absence of a transport network, but there are plans to develop facilities for drying fruits and exporting them in this form to Europe.

Conclusion

In focusing on the marketing of products at a regional and international level as part of a peasant association movement, ECL has opened up a new approach to combating rural poverty in West Africa. Whilst the direct effects on incomes are hard to quantify, the first four years of the initiative have brought other benefits. The peasant members of Carrefour have gained an understanding of commercial circuits which they can put to use on their own account. More importantly, they are gaining a sense of their economic and social power as an organised movement that cuts across national frontiers.

Despite these successes there have been some major problems. These, in part, stem from the unusual nature of ECL as a commercial organisation which belongs to the peasants. For most members it is their first experience in participating in the management of a modern business. They are handicapped by a lack of management expertise and of experience in modern production and marketing techniques. This has lead to a gap in understanding between the members of the associations and the management of ECL. Apart from the strained relations between the management committee of Carrefour and ECL, there are also problems of effective communication between the management committee and the grass-roots membership of the peasant associations.

Ultimately, a central issue in the evolution of Carrefour is that much of the movement's activities were centred on ECL in the first few years. The necessity of making ECL financially profitable pulled the leadership of the movement towards strategies and policies that were at odds with its original associationist philosophy. This in turn has lead to a demobilisation at the grass-roots and a questioning of the legitimacy of the direction taken by the leadership. The problem of how to reinforce the democratic nature of the management of the movement is one of the primary concerns now facing Carrefour.
2.4. POVERTY ALLEVIATION AND PARTICIPATORY DEVELOPMENT IN SOUTH AFRICA

Francie Lund

Poverty in South Africa

South Africa is one of the most unequal societies in the world, ranking second after Brazil. Although its GNP places it in the middle income range of countries, many of its social indicators are similar to those of other poor sub-Saharan African countries. A major, but unresolved, question is whether the development problems of S. Africa are similar to those of other countries in the region or are primarily caused by the specific nature of apartheid. Under the apartheid regime the population was classified into four main 'races': African, coloured, Indian and white and the basic line of cleavage in the measurement of inequality is still racial. In terms of conventional social and economic indicators, whites have the most favourable position, closely followed by Indians; whilst coloured and then blacks have the poorest indicators. The IMR for the white population is 7.3, for the black population it is 54.7. About nine tenths of households in the richest decile are white, while nine tenths of households in the poorest decile are black. Just over 50% of black households are below the poverty line as opposed to no white or Indian households. As a consequence of apartheid some 63% of black households live in rural areas and there is thus a strong rural dimension to poverty, characterised by poor access to water, sanitation, health, electricity. However, with the collapse of controls on rural-urban migration from the mid-eighties, there has been a colonisation of inner city areas by poor and black people as well as a massive growth of informal settlements in peri-urban areas. There is also a clear gender dimension to poverty.

The Political Background

An important aspect of the apartheid period was that the international isolation of the country meant that many South Africans were excluded from the wider debates about development while the politics and organisation of resistance took priority over reconstruction and development. In the early 1960s the ANC decided to go into exile and set up a military wing in order to pursue armed struggle against apartheid. The 1970s and 80s also saw the growth of an organised internal mass civic movement based in the black trade unions and community action groups. The government's response was a joint strategy of 'reform and repression' which attempted to deliver basic services in urban areas and stamp out free political association. In this context the liberation movement developed organisational practices which were neither transparent nor democratic and which remain as a problem within civic organisations today. The formation of the Bantustans enabled the power and authority of traditional leaders to be entrenched and for many of them development and participation represented and still represents a threat.

Development Policies and Programmes

A central question for the ANC/SACP/COSATU alliance in the early 1990s was how to achieve economic growth at the same time as fulfilling their commitment to overcoming the inequalities that characterised apartheid. The initial response of the new government in 1994 was the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) which aimed to meet basic needs, develop
human resources, build the economy and democratisse society. Projects designed to be good development pilots included: free health care for pregnant mothers and young children, primary school nutrition, rural water and sanitation, national public works. However within two years the RDP was moved out of the presidential office and located in different line departments, giving rise to a widespread belief that commitment to RDP has diminished. At the same time, in 1996, the government introduced a new macro-economic policy: GEAR - Growth, Employment and Redistribution. Despite retaining the term redistribution, GEAR is based firmly in the structural adjustment policies advocated by the World Bank.

Other areas in which the new government is trying to tackle the causes and effects of poverty include land reform, urban housing subsidies, domestic water supply, small, medium and micro-enterprise development and a strengthening of the state social security system. There is also a strong investment in research on poverty and the policy implications of poverty alleviation. Major research programmes, like the South African Participatory Poverty Appraisal in 1995, have made strong efforts to include the voices of the poor. Furthermore, after initial uncertainties about the role of NGOs (many of which had dealt directly with donor agencies during the apartheid period) and CBOs, the government is increasingly recognising their importance. In 1995 it established the Transitional National Development Trust (TNDT) as a co-ordinating body for funding NGOs and CBOs, with funding coming from the RDP and the European Union. A National Development Agency will eventually replace the TNDT. Meanwhile an independent NGO coalition has been formed at a national and provincial level.

Constraints on Participatory Development

Whilst the successful struggle against apartheid and the strong commitment to addressing the problems of poverty and exclusion has created a good overall climate for participatory development, there are a number of constraints. In the political and administrative arena, there are difficulties in achieving openness, accountability and participation. These are partly due to the tradition of closed and secret government entrenched under apartheid and perpetuated by those still remaining in the bureaucracy. This bureaucracy also has little experience in delivering services on an integrated, inter-sectoral basis. The massive majority of the ANC, its tradition of secrecy from the years of struggle and the absence of any organised opposition also blunts the drive to openness. The victory of the ANC/SACP/COSATU alliance in the 1994 elections meant that many, who occupied key positions in the struggle against apartheid in the trade union movement, civic associations and NGOs, went into parliament and government. In consequence, there is little clarity on the difference between political parties and civic organisations and on the problems arising from leaders of civic organisations also holding political positions.

Whilst the 1996 Constitution provides for extensive decentralisation of power and responsibility to the provincial and local levels, the details of this still have to be worked out. Merging and replacing the separate government administrations for the different races and the nominally independent bantustan states, each of which had its own institutional culture, rules and regulations, will take some time. Although the RDP placed great emphasis on democratic local authorities working with CBOs and NGOs to establish good government and implement effective development projects, the establishment of representative local authorities is likely to take even longer. Local authorities created by the last government in urban areas have largely collapsed
and in rural areas, the tribal authorities, which were the de facto local authority, on the whole, had antidemocratic practices.

Some aspects of 'culture' in S. Africa can also be seen as a potential obstacle to the pursuit of participatory development. Whilst the new Constitution recognises and protects cultural diversity and there is a strong drive for the full inclusion of all S. Africa's ethnic groups; the fact that much traditional culture is conservative, hierarchical and patriarchal must be recognised. There is a danger that decentralisation and local participation may allow the entrenchment of forms of domination based in traditional authority and culture. In some cases, such as KwaZulu-Natal, the political agenda of traditional leaders is opposition and separatism. The position of women in rural areas, where they are widely excluded from any meaningful decision-making role, is particularly difficult.

Examples of Participatory Development

Some sense of the government's commitment to participatory development can be gained from assessing the policy and programmes of the Department of Water Affairs and Forestry (DWAF). Under the new Constitution, DWAF was mandated to ensure that all the population should have access to basic water supplies and adequate sanitation facilities within five years. Its White Paper emphasises policy principles such as: demand led and community based development, basic services as a human right, equitable regional allocation of resources, environmental integrity, water has an economic value and the user pays. Previously unrepresentative Water Boards are being restructured to include representatives of poor and marginalised groups. The Provincial Planning Forum comprising DWAF, Water Boards, NGOs and CBOs and representatives from related government departments determines and prioritises needs and selects projects for delivery. DWAF has been keen to have community representation on water bodies and to use local contractors and recognised the need for organisational and technical capacity building. Training partnerships have been developed with the private sector and a major NGO in the water field, Mvula.

The achievement of genuine participation in water provision at local level is, however, likely to encounter obstacles from tribal authorities. Even in areas where tribal authorities do not operate there have been problems of the domination of water committees by men from organised interest groups, excluding the voices of women, the very poor and the youth. DWAF's drive to deliver services has also been at the expense of consultation and participation and many projects in some areas of the country are collapsing within months of DWAF handing over. DWAF has been critical of the slowness of the NGO Mvula which has been trying to implement the policy of user pays through building a genuine sense of community ownership and control of water services.

Furthermore, there is also a need to ensure that citizens have the education, skills and confidence to participate. This element of capacity building is being addressed by two clusters of programmes: Adult Basic Literacy and Training (ABET) with proposed linkages into the new National Qualifications Framework; and organisational development or institution building which has grown out of university based development and community leader training programmes. New forms of coalitions of citizens' organisations are emerging. The Regional Consultative Forum (RCF), set up in the 1980s in KwaZulu and Natal in response to the drought, is now performing broker functions between planners and communities, allowing NGOs and
CBOs to make their views heard by local and provincial government. In the urban housing field, the fact that communities contain different interest groups is being reflected in the concept of social compacts. This is a form of agreement between all parties with a specific claim on land to be developed. The aim is to jointly define the principles guiding the development, agree the range and levels of service and define roles and responsibilities of the parties. The National Housing Board has made the formation of a local social compact a condition for getting the new housing subsidy.

Potential Dangers

Despite the commitment of the new government to policies of poverty alleviation and participation and the vibrancy of civil society, there are a number of potential dangers. Some of these are due to the absence of any accumulated understanding and experience of participation, others have roots in wider economic, political and cultural factors. While, for example, the need for the poor to participate in research in poverty has been recognised and high quality work generated, there is a danger that mechanisms to feed the views of the poor into policy-making and programme design will not be established. Although remarkable gains have been made in getting women on the policy agenda and producing a gender sensitive Constitution, there are still deeply held ‘cultural’ beliefs about the submissive place of women in society. In addition, the spread of HIV/AIDS, which has its severest effect on women in the poorest parts of the country, has the potential to overturn many of the gains made.

Initial euphoria in South Africa is being replaced by a questioning of the capacity of the government to address basic needs, overcome inherited inequalities and ensure participation. This is partly a question of the time needed to reform legislation and develop new administrative structures and procedures. However, there is also a danger that political pressure to achieve immediate results will lead to placing less emphasis on participatory development, as reflected in the case of DWAF. In such circumstances, participation can become the means by which poor communities are expected to perform, unpaid, what is more properly the job of the local state or the market. The difficulties of creating a situation in which the state can enable citizen participation is reflected in the problem of creating democratic and effective local authorities which, in turn, is compounded by the role of traditional leaders and the absence of a culture of democracy in areas where they are dominant.

Finally, there is the major question of whether the new government’s macro-economic policy will achieve its goals of economic growth and job creation. Any government aiming to democratis and marketise simultaneously is set on a tough path. When it has to de-racialise and deliver in the face of high popular expectations, the task is much harder. It is even harder when globalisation places constraints on the ability of countries to control their own economic and social policies.
2.5. POVERTY ALLEVIATION STRATEGIES AND PARTICIPATORY DEVELOPMENT: THE CASE OF MOZAMBIQUE

Kerry Selvester

Like other countries in the region, Mozambique has a colonial past, but independence came both relatively late and in the context of armed struggle led by FRELIMO. The post-independence period was marked first by destabilisation organised externally by the Smith régime in Rhodesia and the apartheid regime in S. Africa and then by an increasingly destructive and chaotic internal war. The war was officially terminated after the 1992 Rome Accord between FRELIMO and RENAMO and the first multi-party elections, won by FRELIMO, were held in 1994. However, peace came in the context of near economic and administrative collapse, the heavy involvement of international donors in reconstruction, structural adjustment and the rapid dismantling of the centralised socialist system implemented by FRELIMO in the late 1970s and early 1980s. This background is essential for an understanding of the nature of poverty, the emerging policies of poverty alleviation and the difficulties in implementing participatory development.

Poverty in Mozambique

An estimated one million people died during the war, 3-5 million were internally displaced, one million became refugees in neighbouring countries and 250,000 children were separated from their parents. The estimated cost of the war to the economy has been put at $7 billion in lost revenue as well as the widespread destruction of rural health posts, schools and shops. Although Mozambique is primarily an agricultural country with 80% of the current 18 million population living in the countryside; the level of food insecurity is high with over half the population unable to satisfy their minimum daily calorie requirements. The IMR in 1991 was 127 with malnutrition as one of the major causes of infant mortality. In 1996 life expectancy, at an estimated 46 years, was markedly lower than in most Sub-Saharan African countries. The annual population growth rate is 2.7% with a total fertility rate of six child-births per woman as opposed to the average of three for LDCs as a whole. The population is very young, with a dependency rate of around 93%.

In rural areas, poverty is characterised by: dependence on subsistence production with a lack of alternative sources of income, aggravated by a fragmented market economy; low levels of agricultural production and productivity caused by rudimentary technology and labour shortages; seasonal food insecurity (ranging from 2.5 to 5 months), particularly in regions vulnerable to natural disasters. In urban areas, poverty is associated with the phenomenon of rapid urbanisation with 80% of urban dwellers living in peri-urban settlements lacking in basic infrastructure such as water, sanitation, schools and health posts. The main source of income is from salaries but poorer households are dependent on the informal sector activities. Food insecurity is caused by low purchasing power, with 20-30% of urban households consuming less than 60% of minimum daily calorie requirement. Finally, there is a gender bias to poverty, particularly marked by women’s difficulties in gaining access to credit and their lower literacy and school enrolment rates. Most women are active in the urban informal sector and in agriculture in rural areas; of working women only 5% are salaried.
The Historical Context of Participation

It some senses the concept of participatory development in Mozambique was introduced as part of the philosophy and practice of FRELIMO. In the early post-independence phase, citizens were exhorted to participate in the building of a prosperous country and the first Constitution emphasised citizens’ rights to permanent democratic participation in the affairs of the nation. Immediately after independence, with the encouragement of FRELIMO, there was strong popular involvement in many areas of social, economic and political activity. For example, the Grupos Dinamisadores (GDs) organised and mobilised the population at local level, ordering social affairs, forming women’s organisations, regulating productive, commercial and financial activities. However, from the late 1970s, as FRELIMO moved to implement a centralised politico-administrative system, the GDs were incorporated into the formal state system. Some have interpreted this as marking the end of active popular participation under FRELIMO.

Indeed, it has been argued that FRELIMO’s increasingly centralised socialist policies, especially the villagisation programme, together with their prohibition on the involvement in the party or administration by traditional and religious leaders and polygamous men, alienated large numbers of the population and, eventually, contributed to the widening of support for RENAMO. FRELIMO’s opposition to traditional authorities stemmed from their close involvement with the Portuguese administrative system as regulos and cabos de terra, enforcing tax collection and recruiting forced labour. However, traditional authority never entirely lost local legitimacy and, during the war, in some areas, traditional leaders were aligned with RENAMO. In the post-war period, many have come to be seen as the RENAMO counter-balance to FRELIMO administrators at district level. This has lead to a situation in which lower levels of administration are barely functional with different elements seeking political legitimacy with central government, donors and local communities.

Government Poverty Alleviation Policies

The first explicit poverty measures undertaken by the government were in 1990 with the introduction of a social component in the structural adjustment programme, PRE. Three main goals were set out: employment and income generating opportunities for the poor, including rehabilitation of basic infrastructures; improvement of delivery of basic social services to the poor; provision of a safety net for the most vulnerable groups. These measures were introduced before the end of the war and reflected the prioritisation of basic reconstruction and dealing with dire poverty over longer term plans for development. In 1994 a Poverty Alleviation Unit was set up in the Ministry of Finance and Planning to establish a poverty data base, undertake poverty and vulnerability mapping and develop indicators for monitoring the policy and programme impacts. It is intended that a National Poverty Profile will permit the elaboration of a Poverty Reduction Action Plan.

In the current government programme, poverty reduction and the elimination of absolute poverty are still the main priorities. The 1995 National Strategy for Poverty Reduction identified: improvement in rural livelihoods; investment in human resources through education, primary health care, safe water and sanitation; improvement in safety nets for the poorest. Improvement in rural livelihoods was to be achieved through: expansion of production, improved productivity and agricultural markets; job creation through investment in infrastructure; promotion of
self-employment through training and credit schemes prioritising women; establishment of a safety net to respond to natural disasters. Measures taken include the distribution of seeds and tools and there has been an increase in the area under cultivation as people return to the land. However, there is still a need to improve the quality of seeds and technology and the development of a rural market system requires the rehabilitation of rural roads, shops and markets. The government is also taking steps to make it easier to obtain trading licences, create alternative sources of credit such as Local Savings Co-operatives and reduce taxes on imports used in agricultural production. The safety net programme for particularly vulnerable groups comprises interventions such as: GAPVU, an income transfer programme involving cash payments to increase levels of food consumption and improve nutritional levels in urban areas; FSM, a programme involving cash subsidies for the purchase of drugs and infant feeding supplements from national health service pharmacies; and a programme for the free supply (or reduced prices) of educational materials and school meals.

Participatory Development

These poverty alleviation measures have been constructed largely within the standard World Bank structural adjustment framework and are not the outcome of any widespread consultative process, particularly with beneficiaries. However, there are wider difficulties in implementing participatory development in Mozambique’s current situation. More than a decade of war, the mass movement of populations and extreme and widespread poverty has undermined the cohesiveness of many social groups and limited the extent to which they are able to conceive of a long-term future. Short term survival strategies of families can mean involvement in the black economy, in trade rather than production, in avoidance of tax and customs duties and thus reductions in government revenue ear-marked for longer term development programmes.

NGOs

NGOs and the international donor community have played and will continue to play a significant role. The history of international co-operation in Mozambique began with solidarity workers from all over the world working within government structures after independence. This has now changed to a situation where donor money channelled through NGOs constitutes a major economic and political force. However the political power of NGOs stems from their financial resources rather than grass-roots legitimacy and some commentators have noted that, rather than partners, most have become a ‘Trojan horse’ for donor interests. Those NGOs which have tried to develop more participatory approaches with local communities have been hampered by the difficulty of identifying legitimate local leaders and structures to work with. Those who have opted to listen to the voice of traditional leaders have faced the problem that such leaders do not have a democratic stance and are gender biased. Mozambique does not have a long history of indigenous NGOs operating at national level. Prior to the mid 1980s the ‘voluntary’ sector was limited to co-operatives, trade unions and social welfare institutions which were generally linked to government political structures. However, there are some examples of indigenous grass-roots organisations such as the co-operative movement in the green zones in Maputo which now contains 183 functioning co-operatives with 6000 members and provides much of the fresh produce for the city.
Participation by the Community

Although self-reliance enabled much of the population of Mozambique to survive the war years; many of those who spent nearly 10 years in camps of various kinds have learnt a culture of dependency. To this must be added both the history of centralised rule during the colonial period and under FRELIMO during the single party period and the fact that, now, models for development are imposed from outside, either by multi-national agencies or by NGOs. There is evidence of participation by communities in the reconstruction of social infrastructures like schools and health posts though this may reflect the provision of money or goods by donors in return for participation rather than a genuine community initiative. Apart from the recent growth of human rights organisations, there are an increasing number of beneficiary associations formed to increase the possibilities of access to funds amongst groups concerned with specific issues such as land rights, the disabled, demobilised soldiers, women. Small loan and credit schemes are also popular and practised by many NGOs working in rural areas. The resurgence of churches, especially in rural areas, as the backbone of many development initiatives with a high degree of local legitimacy should also be noted. However most of these organisations are still heavily dependent on external financing and, as a result, are constrained in their ability to grow and transform.

In general, there are few examples of participatory development where initiatives come from the community and programmes are implemented and managed by those directly benefiting. A major concern here is the lack of understanding of planners and community workers of the realities of rural and urban life and the need for re-skilling professionals in listening and learning methodologies. Too often participatory research, being carried out by many agencies, is restricted to concentrating on rapidly identifying concrete priorities in order to 'help' and, whilst adding to knowledge about communities, is still far from a true dialogue.

Conclusions

Many of the constraints on the growth of participatory development in Mozambique are shared with other countries in Sub-Saharan Africa. These include: the inheritance of rigid and hierarchical administrative institutions and procedures that do not stimulate innovation and initiative and have weak notions of public accountability; the undemocratic nature of many of the institutions of traditional authority; the fact that much of the participatory development discourse and its associated policy agendas are imported or imposed by external agencies. However, there are some specific factors to do with the chaos and poverty resulting from the post-independence war. Much of the development of Mozambique in the recent period has been dependent on foreign resources and interests, with goals and time scales which are often incompatible with the rhythm of intervention possible or desirable at community level.

For people to be able to use their energies creatively and constructively and look to the future, they need to have health, strength and time. In the harsh economic climate of contemporary Mozambique this space is difficult to come by, especially for women. There is also a need for an orderly and ordered society with an adequate political and legal framework that provides for and protects participation and is conducive to local level initiatives. Thus, whilst the political will to create a supportive policy environment exists and there have been recent moves to deconcentrate administration, the poverty of human and material resources means there is little
active engagement by administrators. Flexible management is subordinated to goal orientated programmes and an obsession with strategic planning. Empowerment and capacity building programmes receive low interest from many NGOs as they are non-goal orientated and appear to have low impact. Decentralisation, which should ideally provide the environment for the intersection between the macro and micro, is not happening as neither government nor donors are willing to entrust budgets to local communities.
Chapter 3 - ANALYSIS, ISSUES and CONCLUSIONS

The language of development in Africa in the 1990s is radically different than what it was in the previous decade. The World Bank’s influential report in 1989 - Sub Saharan Africa: From Crisis to Sustainable Growth - set the tone and content of the debate; liberal democracy, social pluralism and market orientation were to be the three pillars of African reform. African economies were burdened with large public sectors, excessive state intervention and control, poor functioning market mechanisms and the lack of opportunities for more widespread popular involvement in wealth creation. The Report furthermore turned around the theory that economic development would tend to bring in its wake greater social development and, ultimately, more political freedom; instead, the Report suggested that political legitimacy and consensus were a precondition for sustainable development (World Bank, 1989; Harsch, 1993). In the first half of the 1990s economic liberalisation and political reform have been the twin pillars upon which international donors have built their aid programmes in Africa. These had the aims of creating the economic policies and structures which could produce the wealth which, in turn, would lead to poverty reduction and to an enabling political environment which could create the conditions for ‘better governance’ and more effective citizen participation. Based upon the case studies of this Paper and other relevant documentation, the section below will seek to assess the impact of these policies in the first half of the 1990s.

3.1. POLITICAL REFORM AND PARTICIPATION

In Africa in the 1990s authoritarian regimes have come under siege (Bratton and van de Walle, 1992). Across the continent there have been widespread pressures for political change, on a scale unparalleled since the independence movements of the 50s and 60s. In the past five years countries such as Kenya, Ghana, Mali and Zambia have launched reforms supposedly aimed at permitting greater political pluralism and administrative change. Africa's authoritarian regimes, which reflected the interests of a small privileged elite and which rested upon the support of the State apparatus, the army and regional/ethnic patronage, have been challenged by populations which have increasingly taken to the streets to protest economic hardship and political repression. Decalo (1994) has commented that these internal pressures for 'participatory democracy' have been primarily rooted in a widespread recognition of the utter failure of one-party rule to promote economic development, political accountability and national unity. Across the continent it would appear that there is growing support for democracy, with all its uncertainties and unpredictability, over the continuing abuses of authoritarian rule.

Sandbrook (1996a) offers four reasons why Governments across Africa have acceded to internal pressures for change: strong domestic protest, splits among top Government leaders, contagion induced by democratic experiments elsewhere and pressure from donor agencies. For example, in the early 1990s domestic mobilisation against authoritarian rule forced the hand of autocratic rulers in Mali, Niger, Madagascar and Zambia. Mkandawire (1994) furthermore identified the emergence of a whole range of 'social movements' which have begun to make demands not only in terms of specific policies but, more importantly, on the nature of the State itself and the processes of policy formulation. In some quarters these pressures, however, have been resisted. The introduction of liberal democracy continues to be viewed with suspicion and fear by those who rule; in Nigeria military leaders have stoutly resisted the creation of a free and fairly elected
Government, while in Uganda the principle of greater representation may be accepted but multipartyism is seen as divisive (Makinda, 1996). Despite the still entrenched power of political elites and their resistance, Ake (1993) argues that the democracy movement in Africa is a ‘powerful, objective, historical force’ which expresses the desire of ordinary people to gain power and material improvement.

Democratisation, in conjunction with institutional capacity building, has been seen as the best hope for ‘getting the policies right’ for economic recovery in Africa (Sandbrook, 1996a). Commentators on African politics would appear to agree that the process, however, has yet to take a firm hold and that its foundations are still insecure. Ake (1993) argues that the notions of ‘liberal democracy’ and ‘African democracy’ are not necessarily compatible. Africa is essentially a ‘communal society’ and it is this communalism which defines people’s perceptions of their rights, their freedoms and their responsibilities. In this respect, liberal democracy offers a form of political participation which is markedly different to an African concept of participation, which is so firmly linked to communalism. Western political concepts and systems cannot be easily superimposed upon African’s political heritage and efforts to do so will not easily prosper. The evidence of the past decade would suggest that radical political reform will encounter stiff obstacles:

- While a number of countries in Africa appear to have experienced a more genuine political liberalisation - for example, Botswana, South Africa, Zambia and Malawi - most African Governments have suppressed, delayed or manipulated attempts at democratic transition (Sandbrook 1996a). Genuine democratic transitions have occurred in fewer than half of the Sub-Saharan countries and even these transitions have largely sought to reform rather than transform entrenched, authoritarian political and administrative practices. Democratic transitions have marked only limited change and have often given rise to high expectations which weakened States can not fulfill. Fragmented party systems built around personalities or regional/ethnic loyalties lead to ambiguous and uncertain rule. The studies of Allen (1992), Raftopolos (1992) and Barchiesi (1996) in Benin, Zimbabwe and Nigeria respectively all attest to the immense difficulties and obstacles which current processes of political reform are encountering.

- Makinda (1996) sees a major impediment to multi-party democracy in Africa in the inexperience of African political leaders in running multi-party systems. He refers to the ‘winner takes it all’ mentality pervasive in African politics, in which the looser has no political role, no right to question or criticise and no involvement in debates on policy. In such a mentality, genuine democracy will find it difficult to take a firm hold.

- In his review of the movement towards democracy in Africa, Wiseman (1995) points to the critical role of political coalitions in boosting economic reform. Such coalitions would allow, for example, export-orientated small holders and business people to augment their power and put their support behind the reform programme. In the past, however, authoritarian regimes fragmented or suppressed such forms of association and it will take time for them to be rebuilt. In countries such as South Africa and Zimbabwe, however, significant industrialisation and commercialisation have created the conditions in which well organised interest groups - unions, commercial associations - can be involved in negotiations on economic reform.

- While the moves toward political reform may imply or even encourage more widespread involvement in policy formulation and implementation, such trends inevitably come up against the power of centralised authority. Thomas-Slayter (1994) argues that, while African Governments might encourage communities to undertake various kinds of development activities, which local people begin to develop, the centre inevitably moves to destroy any local organisation which is perceived to be threatening. African Governments historically emphasise administrative rather than political decentralisation and there are few instances in which real authority and resources are transferred to lower levels. Thomas-Slayter cites Kenya’s Harambee movement and Tanzania’s experiment with participatory democracy - ujamaa - as examples of national programmes of promoting local involvement which were never allowed to ‘threaten the status quo’.
Given different colonial traditions, regional and ethnic diversity and divergent post-independence political histories, assessing the balance sheet of political reform in Africa in the 1990s is an impossible task. Bratton and van de Walle (1992) observed, at an early stage in the process, that popular protest and political reform had only just begun and that their future course and outcome in such a range of countries was uncertain. Five years on, the evidence would suggest that their caution was justified. Sandbrook’s (1996b) review of the ‘democratic transition’ in six African States - Ghana, Mali, Niger, Zambia, Tanzania and Madagascar - concluded that the transition lacked consolidation; democracy entails more than periodic elections but depended also on an array of democratic institutions which could guarantee, for example, government accountability and the transparency of decision-making. Election may lead to a change in the form of Government, but they cannot ensure a transformation of the political regime. It is unrealistic to expect fundamental institutional changes in Africa’s political systems given that the impetus for these changes is largely external and that Africa’s masses have yet to emerge in any substantial way from more than a century of colonial and post-independence authoritarian rule.

Historical legacies in Africa present formidable challenges to processes of democratisation and deep regional ethnic and communal cleavages undermine the trust which is a basic characteristic of democratic institutions (Oyugi and Gitonga, 1987). The question is whether greater and more effective democracy could generate the necessary political will and leadership to bring about the necessary economic reforms so that development is not the preserve of the powerful few. In this respect Sandbrook (1996a) argues that, while democratisation may not directly strengthen political will, it could buttress a Government’s reformist resolve. Democracy by itself, however, does not necessarily ensure good governance or enhanced political capacity to enact economic reform. Indeed, Allen, Baylies and Szefert (1992) have argued that, as long as the pressures for democratisation are sponsored by ‘external interests’ (as opposed to internal social forces), they will likely be confined to parliamentarism and the revolving of national elites. Furthermore, given the adverse consequences of SAPs, the majority of Africa’s poor are more concerned with survival than with demands for great political representation (Makinda, 1996).

In his examination of participatory democracy in Africa, Decalo (1994) argued that the prospects for what he termed ‘participatory politics’ were decidedly gloomy. The spread of participatory democracy in Africa, despite some five years of intense external pressure, is still ‘spotty’ and, apart from a few examples (Benin, Equatorial Guinea, South Africa), it has hardly affected the political landscape. Morrison’s (1996) study of political transition in Mozambique similarly cast doubt upon the ‘democratic content’ of social change since 1992; the imposition of a popular model of democratisation by external donors in a context in which peasants see democracy as meaningless in the face of the same old privations and where arbitrary state authority still held sway. Furthermore, Bratton and van de Walle’s (1992) study of popular protests and political reforms in thirty one ‘reformable’ States in Sub-Saharan Africa concluded that the partial liberalisation of authoritarian regimes did not amount to a ‘transition to democracy’. Democratisation historically is seen as a process whereby the masses enter the political arena and assert their rights. This process has begun in Africa, but given the authoritarian characteristics of the body politic, the challenges remain formidable and progress is unpredictable.
3.2. ECONOMIC REFORM AND PARTICIPATION

Within the context of economic reforms in Africa since the mid 1980s - withdrawal of the State from many economic operations, the dismantling of state regulatory bodies and liberalisation of pricing and marketing structure - the question arises whether these reforms have created 'economic space' for the poor and their organisations to derive tangible benefits? Furthermore, whether the withdrawal of the State has opened up economic opportunities which previously excluded groups, through their organisations, have been able to exploit; and finally whether, as a result of increasing economic power, such groups have been able to increase their political power and have been able to influence politics, public investment plans and the flow of resources to previously disadvantaged areas and peoples. In a general sense there is evidence to suggest that in several African countries - for example Ghana, Senegal and Mali - the vacuum left by the State's withdrawal is beginning to be filled by local organisations, often representing smaller farmers, which have begun to take over some of the input-supply, credit and marketing functions previously performed by the State. On the other hand, there is little dispute that the economic reforms have also generally widened income disparities between the rich and the poor and that increasingly private companies have filled economic vacuums where local organisations have not had the resources and skills to do so (Mead, 1994; ILO; 1996).

Without a far ranging and well resourced research programme, the above questions are difficult to answer. In their examination of Democracy, Governance and Economic Policy in Sub-Saharan Africa, Healy and Robinson (1992) concluded with a substantial research agenda related to the likely outcomes of political and economic liberalisation. They suggested, for example, that detailed micro-level studies were lacking of 'organised interest groups' and their role in influencing state action and in promoting greater participation in policy-making and implementation. They further suggested that research is needed to test the hypothesis that political liberalisation leads to more widely accessible economic reform. Gibbon (1993) similarly pointed out that much of the research to date in Africa on the reform process had been at the macro-level and, in particular, had not examined the informal sector and the increasing opportunities for economic participation.

Despite the pressures which have been exerted and the resources which have been made available, historically the current reform programme in Africa is relatively new and elite controlled political and economic systems will not easily yield. For example, Gibbon (1993) has argued that accumulation is still in the hands of the State elites and racially constituted economic elites and that there is little evidence of substantial accumulation outside of these. While such statements might be generally true, there is evidence that the climate of political liberalisation has encouraged the emergence of organisations and groups which, either for reasons of self-preservation in the face of shrinking State support or for economic opportunism, have begun actively to engage in productive activities and to seek out economic space:

1. In the 1980s in Tanzania, local Voluntary Organisations became increasingly important in providing alternatives where the State's ability to guarantee adequate incomes and basic services declined. Indeed throughout the 80s pressure from some of these groups began to influence the State's agenda and to bring State policies more into line with the needs of the poor. In the years following independence Tanzania's Government sought to co-opt and to curtail such organisations but, as the State plunged into economic crisis in the 80s, these organisations became revitalised and helped people to find their own solutions to everyday problems of food, income, security and services. These organisations are usually formed on ethnic, religious and kinship ties which can mitigate against the formation of broader alliances and their influence is often more regional than national. Many of these
organisations have external support and they are instrumental in opening up space for economic opportunities at the local level. (Tripp, 1992).

2. Several studies illustrate the increasing role of local NGOs in Africa and their attempts both to generate economic opportunities and also to represent the interests of the poor in policy matters (Bratton, 1990; Copestead and Wellard, 1993; Gary, 1996). This is a vast area of enquiry and generalisations are difficult. Bratton’s studies in Zimbabwe and Kenya concluded that, while not disputing the conventional view that the rural poor in Africa have difficulty making their voices heard in the public policy process, NGOs representing the rural poor can attain a modicum of policy influence and can alter the allocation of public resources. Fowler (1991) has argued, in the context of structural adjustment in Africa, that NGOs fulfil the role of securing equity by targeting and assisting groups which have been marginalised by the adjustment process. Gary (1996) examined the above in the context of NGOs in Ghana and how increasingly they have enabled the poor to obtain the means to become productive. He concluded that NAOS, in their perceived ability to deliver development, promote participation and mitigate the social effects of adjustment on the poor, have begun to occupy prominent political space in Africa. The down side of this massive burgeoning of the NGO sector, however, has been the increased opportunities for accumulation on the part of a small number of African elites.

3. A recent ILO (1995) study of economies under reconstruction in East Africa described the dramatic impact which SAPs have had upon agricultural cooperatives, which were largely unprepared for the drastically changing economic environment, which saw their state support substantially cut and which managerially did not have the capacity immediately to respond to the situation. However, evidence in the early 1990s seems to suggest that, although the cooperative movement in East Africa has shrunk in terms of membership, the surviving organisations are beginning to emerge and are seeking to re-establish themselves as regulatory forces in a liberal market and able to take advantage of the opportunities afforded by liberal policies. Puttermann’s (1995) study of smallholder agriculture in Tanzania in the post liberalisation era noted a “new wave of cooperatives” with substantial Nordic donor support, which were beginning to break into export crop marketing. Finally Beaudoux et al. (1994) examined the development of farmer “empowerment” through cooperatives and other farmer organisations in six African countries, as part of a wider World Bank study and suggested that “new dynamics are emerging from the grassroots level in Africa, based on shared interests and common initiatives.” The different country studies pointed to a favourable political climate, supportive but not dominant external funding and sound internal management as the key factors in sustaining these organisations.

4. Tripp’s (1994) study of economic reform and its effect of causing greater political unity among women in Uganda and Tanzania is an important contribution to our understanding of how women are responding to economic crisis. She found that in both countries poor women, in order to cope with unprecedented hardship, were joining groups to facilitate income-generating activities, savings and the provision of social services. In both countries in the 1990s women’s organisations were among the fastest growing types of new associations. Most of these organisations remain small and informal and serve as a means of saving money to reinvest in a business, to get a business started or to save profits which are used later for urgent expenses. These organisations have also had an impact on the broader political arena; in Uganda, for example, as a result of pressure the Government was compelled to address women’s issues at a national level in a way not addressed by previous Governments. Tripp concludes that these women’s organisations have proliferated in part due to opportunities afforded by liberalisation policies which have obliged states to concede political and economic space to non-government actors.

5. Finally Mead’s (1994) study on the contribution of small enterprises to employment growth in post-restructuring South and East Africa provides evidence of a substantial start up of small businesses in the past five years, absorbing up to 40% of the increase in the labour force in the countries under study. The key policy implication is ‘start-up’ and the need to recognise that enterprise start-up faces different problems and constraints from those faced by firms seeking to expand. Mead, however, concludes that we still do not accurately understand the relationship between growth of employment and reductions in the levels of poverty and that this relationship demands more detailed study.

The foregoing evidence would suggest, therefore, that the economic reforms in Africa since the mid-1980s, while having a significant and negative impact upon the livelihoods of the poor, have encouraged some groups and organisations to explore the opening economic space and to take
advantage of it where appropriate. These explorations should been seen in the context of the people's continuing responses to the economic crisis in Africa, which are largely orientated towards survival, and a whole range of on-going initiatives at the local level aimed at ensuring the long-term survival of local economies and their eventual dynamic transformation. (Gooneratne and Mbilinyi, 1992) Business associations, small enterprises, export-orientated small and medium farmers, local NGOs supporting income-generating activities and women's groups in the informal sector have, to differing degrees in different countries, seized available opportunities and sought to turn them to their own advantage. Two significant questions, however, remain: (a) to what extent can these initiatives be seen as constituting the positive benefits of economic reform in terms of distribution and their impact on poverty?, and (b) to what extent do they add up to a challenge to existing political and economic elites and the beginnings of a shift of influence and resources in the direction of previously excluded groups? We have little understanding of the magnitude of such initiatives in relation to the extent of poverty nor of their sustainability. Only careful monitoring at the local and ultimately national level could enhance our understanding.

3.3. FINDINGS FROM THE CASE STUDIES: A SUMMARY

The case studies commissioned for this report, and presented in summarised form in Chapter 2, are not intended to be definitive analyses of the state of play regarding poverty alleviation and participatory development in the countries concerned. Nor, given the great diversity of the continent, should they be seen as necessarily representative of the situation in Africa, or even Sub-Saharan Africa, as a whole. Instead, they provide a series of snapshots which give us some sense of the way in which governments, NGOs, citizens' organisations and local communities are responding to the linked challenge of poverty alleviation and building participation into development. As can be seen, whilst there are many examples of successful participation stemming both from initiatives within civil society and from government, there are also obstacles and constraints which will require sustained efforts to overcome.

The two case studies from West Africa are focused on a set of specific issues to do with the ability of associations of small farmers and rural co-operatives to develop sustainable forms of organisation that can operate in the market and raise the living standards of their members. The case studies from S.Africa and Mozambique provide a counter-balance to this more micro level approach by presenting a more general overview of the situation in two countries emerging from long periods of internal instability and by assessing the potentials and constraints on participatory development. The fifth study, from Zimbabwe, lies between, reviewing the impact of structural adjustment on the urban population and assessing the impact on NGOs and GROs, especially in the field of income generation.

The Cameroon case study records that planters who are marketing their produce through associations and cooperatives have been able to get higher prices than through individual sales. This and the consequent positive effect on production and incomes is a clear indication of the potential gains to be made through participatory and collective forms of marketing organisation. However, the case study also draws attention to the difficulties faced by farmers' associations and rural co-operatives in adjusting to a free-market economy. Both it and the case study on Carrefour note how such associations have grown out of more traditional forms of mutual aid and
local level survival strategies which were responses to changing climatic and environmental conditions. With the withdrawal of state support mechanisms such as marketing boards they are finding the transition to operating as production and marketing associations problematic. The study indicates that major handicaps are the lack of knowledge about the price structure of the international market in agricultural commodities, inability to exert any effective control over prices set by purchasers, transporters and processors and finally the instability of international markets.

Thus, whilst the study finds evidence for an increase in production and incomes, small farmers are still at the mercy of the international market and of the long term deterioration in the terms of trade. The study also questions the capacity of government agencies to provide effective training for small farmers in production and marketing skills and argues for the development of more accessible rural credit systems. Finally, there is the significant point of the extent to which state support for the formation of associations and co-operatives can be diverted away from the rural poor. The study notes that there was evidence that many of the registered associations and co-operatives had no concrete existence on the ground and were being set up by local elites in order to take advantage of access to start-up funds.

The case study on Crossroads provides rather similar evidence about the difficulties faced by associations of small farmers in adjusting to the international market economy. The history of Crossroads indicates the vitality of grass-roots organisations and their potential to move from the local to the international level in terms of institution building. The founding of Exchange Crossroads Ltd. as a mechanism to strengthen the capacities of members in production, marketing and management reflects the recognition by leaders of peasant movements of members' lack of experience in modern production and marketing techniques and of the need to develop a collective approach to operating in the market. As a commercial business owned by small-farmer members in four countries, ECL clearly represents a novel and innovative approach to combating rural poverty.

The case study provides evidence of how, through organisation, peasants can gain increased access to national and international markets and achieve higher producer prices than would be possible on an individual basis. It also provides specific evidence that the stronger presence in the market, created by ECL, generated additional returns which could be fed back into the local economy through partners in the marketing schemes. However, despite this success, the study notes that there have been conflicts within Crossroads. Much of this conflict appears to have centred round members' concerns that the management of ECL was moving too quickly in the direction of becoming a purely commercial operation and sidelining the original values of mutual aid and social solidarity. The study depicts the way in which such gaps in understanding and communication between leadership, management and members can have a demobilising effect at the grassroots. In this sense, one of the major lessons from Crossroads appears to be that the institution of modern business management structures and over-concentration on financial profitability can create serious strains in a movement which developed on the basis of more traditional values and institutions of mutual aid. Ultimately, the study argues that, whilst direct positive impacts of ECL's activities on incomes are not easy to quantify, the learning process has been very important. Members have increased their knowledge of the market, gained a sense of their potential economic and political power and are confronting the problem of how to ensure greater accountability and democracy.
The difficulties of small producers and informal sector organisations are also reflected in the Zimbabwe case study. This notes that, whilst members of co-operatives and self-help associations in peri-urban Harare have been able to increase their incomes and accumulate savings, a major constraint has been lack of access to loans, particularly from the formal financial sector. This has placed limits on their ability to expand or diversify. In addition, small co-operatives are operating in a market environment and are in competition both with which each other and larger firms. There was little evidence, unlike the example of Crossroads, that they had begun to network to discuss areas of common interest. As with the other cases, the Zimbabwe study also stresses the lack of skills and training in management as a major handicap.

The overall conclusion of the Zimbabwe case study is that, despite the addition of programmes designed to deal with poverty alleviation, structural adjustment so far has had largely negative effects on the urban poor in terms of falling incomes and increasing prices of food and social services. It argues that, despite the intentions contained in the Poverty Alleviation Action Plan, little has been done by government to assist the informal sector to move from its marginal position and stresses the need for the implementation of a coherent policy to address constraints on income generating activities by the poor. National and local NGOs involved in addressing issues of urban poverty are all experiencing major financial difficulties due to the adverse national economic situation as well as the decline in donor funding. In such a context, most NGOs appear to be primarily concerned for their own survival and are finding it difficult to network and develop a common front to press for changes in the wider policy environment.

The South African case study provides a wider, more macro level review than the first three case studies. It records the strong political commitment of the first post-apartheid government to tackling poverty and inequality within a framework of participatory development as well as the vibrancy and mobilisation of large sections of civil society.

The examples drawn from the water, sanitation and housing sectors show the institution of structures and processes that seek to ensure genuine representation of community interests. Attention is also being given to the need for citizens to have the capacity and confidence to participate in terms of building their education and skills. The study notes how women, historically excluded from participation, have been recognised in the new constitution and placed squarely on the policy agenda.

However, even in such an apparently favourable political climate, it also notes the existence of a number of major potential constraints and obstacles. In order to maintain its legitimacy there is a temptation for the government to implement development programmes at a pace which does not allow for the formation of sustainable institutions of participation with local communities and beneficiaries. The study also notes the inheritance, from the apartheid period, of a closed and secretive bureaucracy with little experience of either public accountability or delivering services on an integrated, inter-sectoral basis. Whilst there are some factors specific to S. Africa in this respect, this is a general problem across the continent and is reflected in the Mozambique study.

At a wider level, the study raises questions about whether some aspects of African 'culture' can be seen as an obstacle to participatory development and voices concerns about the extent to which decentralisation and the devolution of power to local authorities is likely to benefit traditional elites which have not shown a strong commitment to democratic institutions and
processes. In this context, the position of women is likely to be particularly difficult. Thus, as in the Mozambique study and the two micro level studies from W. Africa, the S. Africa case pointedly raises the question of the potential and actual conflicts between 'modern' and 'traditional' socio-economic systems and values which is referred to in other parts of this report.

Finally, the S. African study, echoing themes in the Zimbabwe study, argues that there are potential conflicts between the new government's policy of market-lead economic growth and its commitment to democratisation, poverty alleviation and greater equity, especially in a context where globalisation constrains the national scope for independent action.

Mozambique, emerging from over a decade of internal war, with catastrophic effects on economic, social and administrative structures, provides little direct evidence on the relationship between participatory development and poverty alleviation. The case study raises the question of the conditions necessary both for the effective implementation of government poverty alleviation policies and for the active participation of the mass of the population. It notes that, rather like the emergence of peasant associations in the Carrefour study, individuals, households and communities, faced with the breakdown of ordered economic and social life, will adopt survival strategies based on traditional coping mechanisms. However, it argues that such strategies, although effective in the short-term, may not be a sufficient basis for citizen participation in the wider economic and political life of the country.

The study points to the long history of authoritarian or centralised rule under colonialism and under Frelimo and then to the post-war imposition of development models from outside as factors which have created and maintained a top-down approach and discouraged participation at the grass-roots level. Under such conditions, development policies and their associated programmes tend to have objectives and time scales which are at odds with priorities and the pace of life at local level. Significantly, the study notes that many international NGOs, who have a significant political and financial presence in Mozambique, may be representing external interests and have frequently failed to listen to local voices.

Thus, the Mozambique study, after noting that there may be a minimum level of material well-being necessary for participation to be conceived as a major goal by citizens, also stresses the importance of creating a political, legal and administrative framework conducive to participation. Echoing the points made in the S. African study, it stresses the difficulties of achieving rapid change in the administrative culture of government and of ensuring political and administrative decentralisation. Mozambique, like most other African countries, possesses a cadre of administrators whose culture has been formed within the framework of centralised government and central government is reluctant to devolve budgetary responsibilities to the local level. The specific situation of post-war Mozambique, where in many areas local government is still not functioning and where Frelimo and RENAMO are competing for political legitimacy, creates even more problems for implementing decentralisation. Finally, the study, like that on S. Africa, raises the thorny question of the extent to which decentralisation is likely to reinforce the authority of traditional elites who are not necessarily committed to forms of democratic and participative organisation and who tend to exclude women from decision making.
3.4. THE BALANCE SHEET: CRITICAL ISSUES IN PROMOTING PARTICIPATION

Over a decade ago El Ghonemy (1985) asked the question whether ‘participation’ could resolve rural poverty and concluded that there was insufficient empirical evidence to form an authoritative conclusion. Asking the same question in 1997 would present a similar dilemma. In the past decade or so there has been a mushrooming of ‘participatory development’ in Africa and this has manifested itself in the changing nature of the principles supposedly underlying donor driven development. Participatory development in Africa, in the sense of projects of planned social change as opposed to indigenous traditions of cooperation and support, is an external construct and it has begun to flourish where the resources have been made available. The distinction, however, must be drawn between the strengthening of people’s participation within the processes of African development and its potential to have an impact upon poverty. But as Graham (1994) has commented, development processes in Africa ‘move slowly’ and the reforms of the past decade have had little effect upon poverty which, he argues, has simply grown worse in many countries. While recognising that ‘participatory’ initiatives in several countries have begun to bear fruit, it is in the light of such sanguine comments that we should perhaps reach our overall conclusions.

The efforts to promote a participatory form of development in many African countries in the past decade have been quite vigorous and undoubtedly have left their mark. In the mid 1980s the FAO launched its People’s Participation Programme (PPP) which included Ghana, Sierra Leone and Zambia and which, through the availability of credit, sought to create the conditions for the rural poor to begin to gain access to the resources which could ‘kick start’ their involvement in development. In 1987 the FAO also held a Workshop to review a number of cases of Innovative Participatory Development in eight African countries and argued that an extension of the approach could be ‘vital for helping the rural poor to participate in the benefits that development can bring.’ (McKone, 1987). Ghai (1988) examined a number of community based associations in West Africa and described how they were seeking to bring previously excluded groups within the development process. Later Wellard and Copenatak (1993) examined a whole range of NGO initiatives in promoting a participatory form of development, mainly in the area of natural resource development, and showed how in Africa the methods and techniques of promoting farmer participation had filtered down to the grassroots project level. Burkey’s (1994) timely study on the steps and issues involved in promoting participatory development in a Ugandan context has also been widely influential. Finally the studies of Gooneratne and Mbiliinyi (1992), Bergdall (1993) and Cromwell (1996) have all contributed to examining the concept of participatory development within an African context and to showing its increasing relevance and practice.

In terms of promoting a participatory approach to poverty alleviation in Africa, in the 1990s the UNDP has, for example, undertaken several important initiatives: (a) promoting a country-wide dialogue on Malawi on anti-poverty strategies, (b) by supporting the development of a Poverty Alleviation Action Plan in Zimbabwe, and (c) operationalising a small grants programme in several countries which is intended to encourage local decision making and promote networking between community groups and government agencies. In the 1990s also there have been two major initiatives which have made substantial progress in promoting greater participation in poverty alleviation strategies:
(i) The UNDP undertook a detailed study entitled Poverty Alleviation in the Gambia. A Challenge to Participatory Approach which sought to develop a strategy for poverty alleviation by using a participatory approach (Poutianan, 1994). The overall strategy focused on four main issues: (a) enhancing the productive capacity of the poor, (b) improving access to and performance of social services, (c) building capacity at the local level, and (d) promoting participatory communication processes. The overall strategy combined intervention at the local and at the policy level; an attempt to achieve a balance between a macroeconomic environment, which would promote equity, provide new development opportunities and support human resource development, and the establishment of an institutional framework favourable to a people-centred approach to development. Central to the development of the strategy was the building of consensus between policy makers, donors and local people and this was achieved via extensive discussions prior to the elaboration of detailed courses of action. Conceptually the strategy was a move away from ad hoc actions to coordinated interventions on a national scale; and also from conceptualising participation as a means, aimed solely to promote greater project efficiency and sustainability, to the empowerment of local people. The strategy has begun to be implemented and it is hoped that much will be learned on how a participatory approach to poverty alleviation might be promoted on a national scale.

(ii) The World Bank’s concept and technique of Participatory Poverty Assessment (PPA) has been widely promoted in Africa and has come to be seen as a critical prelude to the determination of national poverty alleviation strategy (Salmen, 1995). The first PPA in Africa was undertaken in Ghana 1993-95 and since then similar exercises have been set up in more than twenty African countries. A PPA has a number of key elements; a poverty profile, a review of current Government policies relating to poverty, an analysis of relevant public expenditures and institutions and an overview of NAOS and community based organisations working on poverty issues. Critical, however, is the direct involvement of a wide range of poor people in explaining the conditions and problems associated with their poverty. This involvement is predicated on the assumption that, when poor men and women participate in the design of a poverty strategy, Governments can be more confident that their poverty alleviation policies and programmes will have a positive impact on the day-to-day lives of the people for whom they are intended. This later assertion is critical and will serve as an indicator against which to judge the effectiveness of the PPA strategy. With so much PPA activity in Africa at this moment, it is hoped that the results will throw some important insights on the relationship between people’s participation and poverty alleviation strategies.

While the above studies and initiatives and the undisputed evidence of the penetration of the language of participation together add up to a substantial move forward in terms of how Africa’s development is currently being discussed and promoted, we can be less sure on their impact and whether they constitute a radical shift in African development strategy. Certainly in national and pan-African fora, commitments to participatory development have been voiced but, in the labyrinth of economic, political and social networks and relationships at the level at which programmes and projects operate, its overall impact is as yet difficult to measure and assess. Undoubtedly poor people are gaining access and achieving some measure of economic and political influence but, until we are able to adequately document these trends, their true extent remains unknown. In summary, if a participatory form of development is, in any meaningful way, to emerge and flourish within the current ‘reality’ of African development, there are a number of critical issues which will be influential in this process: 

The active collaboration between Government and those who hold economic and political power, on the one hand, and the poor, their representatives and their organisations on the other. Ake (1993) has suggested that there is an increased awareness among Africans that the monopoly of power enjoyed by national elites “has to be broken on order that power can be transferred to the people who have little to lose and much to gain.” This collaboration can only be achieved through negotiation and when those in power are prepared to concede and to fashion new relationships and not merely seek to manipulate the processes involved. Ndieni’s (1993) study of ORAP - Organisation of Rural Associations for Progress: Zimbabwe - aptly illustrates the importance of Government - Development Agency cooperation and the positive outcomes this can produce. Governments and
their allies must be prepared to negotiate and, ultimately, to concede greater people's participation, if a broader consensus on how to tackle poverty is to be achieved. The contrary may well provoke increasing confrontation.

The importance of transforming participation from a one-off injection in programmes and projects into an institutionalised form of development practice, in both the public and private domain. Buck's (1993) pioneering study of the critical events and processes in the institutionalisation of participatory approaches in agroforestry in Kenya over a decade is illustrative of the need to take the longer time view. Similarly Graham's (1994) study of poverty alleviation strategies in Senegal and the work of AGETIP - a semi-autonomous government agency referred to a 'small-scale institutional revolution' in terms of the building of vital administrative infrastructure at the community level which was the basis of many autonomous local development initiatives. Research into the role of community level institutions in poverty alleviation strategies in Nigeria similarly underlined the importance of building people's participation around these institutions (Francis, 1995). Efforts to promote participation should be accompanied by efforts to ensure that its lessons are learned, that knowledge is accumulated and that priority is given to the dissemination at different levels of current ideas and practices.

If it is to be an effective strategy to combat poverty, initiatives to promote participatory development must reach down to the poorest and not merely to those groups on the margins who are in a better position to take advantage of such opportunities. This is a major challenge and one which, at this moment, has not really been taken up. The World Bank (1993) underlined this critical issue and, in the context of Uganda, argued that unless this was done, the poorest would effectively lose all opportunity to participate in any economic growth. A key initiative in this area is the current work to promote a more participatory approach to poverty assessment. This is a critical issue which is being addressed in a number of contemporary Participatory Poverty Assessments which could prove to be a most effective mechanism of involving the poor in both the definition of and proposals to tackle poverty.

A key determinant of the success of participatory development in poverty alleviation may well be the future role and influence of NGOs in Africa. Worldwide NGOs are seen as a counterweight to State power; protecting human rights, opening up channels for participation and promoting pluralism. In Africa, Governments and NGOs are 'uncomfortable bedfellows' but they are destined to cohabit (Bratton, 1989). In Africa generally it is possible to say that NGOs have links with the poorest groups, place emphasis upon community level initiatives and are committed to promote participation (Wellard and Copestake, 1993). They seek not just the direct result from a project initiative but equally the transformation of political and economic structures. Gariyo (1995) urges that NGOs in East Africa should continue to pursue an agenda which seeks to democratis both economic and political power. NGOs constitute countervailing power and harmony with African Governments is not widespread. But NGOs, as important constituents of civil society, appear to have a vital role in trying to ensure that the reform processes in Africa are participatory and that the benefits are shared by the poorest groups.

Attempts to promote participatory development must recognise the essentially pre-capitalist and pre-industrial nature of African society. Political participation derives from the concept of liberal democracy, which is somewhat different from the dominant African concept of participation which is linked to communalism (Ake, 1993). Africa is still largely a communal society and it is this communalism which defines people's perceptions of involvement and their roles and responsibilities within their communities. Mutual aid and support, defined often on regional or ethnic lines, lie at the heart of this communalism and give rise to a plethora of mutual aid such as labour groups, church organisations and burial groups (Bouman, 1995). Such associations can be enormously influential in determining a community's response to a development initiative. The key lesson is that participatory development approaches should be built upon and, with the agreement of existing communal groups, should recognise the tradition and practices upon which these are constituted. Madu and Umeh's (1993) study of the role of self-help groups in rural transformation in Nigeria confirmed this critical issue.

Harsch (1993) is optimistic that participatory development will take hold in Africa and that popular organisations will emerge and consolidate independent of dominant elites. This process, however, is only in its incipient stages and promoting people's participation in national politics will need to break down deep-rooted mistrust of urban centred political institutions. In the long term different sectors of African society will come to fight for their democratic rights and to
promote their economic interests. Ironically, however, this support for popular empowerment in Africa is taking place at a time when there is a decreasing number of public institutions in which this power might be exercised. Furthermore both Tidemand (1994) and Kiondo (1994) note that the majority of emerging people's organisations are basically concerned with economically survival strategies and any power or influence they achieve is via brokers or patrons of one form or another. Thomas-Slayter (1994), similarly, is hesitant in her conclusions regarding participation and sees a history of African Governments encouraging local communities to take on responsibilities which they could not manage, but moving quickly to destroy such initiatives if significant organisational strength emerges at the local level. In the past decade there can be no doubting the relevance of and the advances made by participatory development in African development and reform strategies, but these achievements need support and further strengthening if they are to consolidate into a proven strategy to tackle the poverty which still dominates the lives of many millions of Africans.
BIBLIOGRAPHY


