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**HUMAN RIGHTS AND DEVELOPMENT**

## I. Introduction

1. Popular participation as a development concept gained wide recognition in Africa in the early nineties. However, development literatures indicate that the idea has been around since the 1950's and 60's. Participatory development, as it is popularly referred to, started as grass-root development model based on the idea of bringing beneficiaries involved in the implementation process of all projects. While the concept succeeded in motivating people to participate it, however, fell short of providing real empowerment to the people. Communities were viewed as contributing to and supporting the national development agenda and not necessarily as being instrumental in determining its content or direction.

2. Despite the various programs and initiatives aimed at eliminating poverty, it continued to persist in much of Africa. The lack of significant progress in this area forced development analysts to re-examine the modalities of administering development programs. Among the areas identified as impediment for development work was the exclusion and marginalisation of poor people both from broader societal participation and also from direct involvement in development initiatives.

3. In response to the above **Popular Participation in Development** emerged as an idea that would address areas overlooked in the previous development paradigms. It represented a fundamental shift - both in attitudes and in methodology, as it was to change decades of top-down, non-participatory approaches to development. And since the 1990s most development agencies and institutions, including ECA, have adopted and promoted participatory development.

4. In Africa, the move toward conceptualizing participation in the broader developmental context started with the declaration of *African Charter for Popular Participation in Development and Transformation* - (Arusha 1990). The Charter pointed out that popular participation need to be viewed both as a means and as an end. As an instrument of development, popular participation provides the driving force for collective commitment for the determination of people-based development processes and willingness by the people to undertake sacrifices and expend their social energies for its execution. As an end in itself, popular participation is the **fundamental right** of the people to fully and effectively participate in the determination of the decisions, which affect their lives at all levels and at all times. Furthermore, the Charter reaffirmed the importance of popular Participation for the consolidation of democracy, good governance, and sustainable economic growth.

5. The Charter also proposed a set of indicators that would assist in measuring progress in implementation of the recommendation of the Charter. Among the recommended indicators were: Literacy rate, which is an index of the capacity for mass participation in public debate; Freedom of association, especially political association; representation of the people and their organization in national bodies; The rule of law and social and economic justice; Press and media freedom; Political accountability of leadership; and Decentralization of decision making process and institutions.<sup>1</sup>

6. Unfortunately, following the declaration of the Charter there was no effort made to draw up a baseline against which progress could be measured. Therefore, an assessment of progress in

<sup>1</sup> International Conference on Popular Participation in The Recovery and development Process in Africa, *African Charter for Popular Participation in Development and Transformation*, Arusha, United Republic of Tanzania, 1990

participation in development would have to be subjective and in general terms. It may be worthwhile to note here that ECA has launched a major project “*monitoring progress toward good governance*”, which will establish a baseline for monitoring progress towards good governance. Some of the indicators of participation that the charter pointed out will be included in the ECA project. Development practitioners view this as a major breakthrough in monitoring and evaluation of progress in participatory development in Africa.

7. This paper will attempt to reassert the importance of participatory development as a tool for development. It will also assess the state of participatory development in Africa since the declaration of the African Charter. Finally, it concludes by making some observations and recommendations that may further strengthen popular participation in Africa.

## II. Current Thoughts In Participatory Development

8. There is an ongoing debate among development specialists as to the impact of democratic approaches to development such as the one under discussion, participatory development. While the discussion regarding the pros and cons of these diverse views is beyond the scope of this paper, nonetheless, it is felt that a brief overview of the strengths and weaknesses of some these thoughts will help us put the role of participatory democracy in development in proper perspective.

9. Let us start with some of the arguments often heard aired on popular journals and newspapers against the merit of participation in development. The view that democracy and participation are not essential ingredients for development seem to be inspired by the impressive economic results shown by the east Asian countries in the past few decades. The argument goes that such achievements were made possible primarily because of government's determined goal to reach high level of economic success. The implications being all other factors of development such as good governance, democracy etc.. do not count for much. The well-respected former president of Singapore, MR Lee Kuan Yew, is a proponent of this line of thinking. In-fact, this view has come to be known as the Lee Thesis.

10. Amartya Sen, the noted Economist, presented a powerful argument against the above in his well-celebrated book *Development as Freedom*. In defense of the expansion of freedom, he argued that “we cannot really take the high economic growth of China or South Korea in Asia as a definitive proof that authoritarianism does better in promoting economic growth - any more than we can draw the opposite conclusion on the basis of the fact that the fastest-growing African country (and one of the fastest growers in the world), vis., Botswana, has been an oasis of democracy on that troubled continent. Much depends on the precise circumstance.”<sup>2</sup> Mr. Sen further pointed out that much of the economic factors or helpful policies that are attributed to the Asian miracle which include “...openness to competition, the use of international markets, a high level of literacy and school education, successful land reforms and public provision of incentives for investment, exporting and industrialization...” all of which have nothing that are inherently inconsistent with the practice of democracy and freedom.<sup>3</sup>

11. Those that point to the experiences of East Asia as a model for development also miss the point that explaining or defining poverty in per capita income alone does not tell the whole story and that a true definition of poverty and development would need to include human-based human capital. These are: education, health care, empowerment, **participation**, ability to self-worth etc. are what make up true development. If there is one lesson that development specialists have learnt in the past two or three decades is that poverty has multi-dimensional features. While economics pre-dominates the discussion on poverty, it must be recognized that discussions on developmental economic issues find their true meaning only

<sup>2</sup> Sen, Amartya, *Development As Freedom*, Anchor Books, New York, 1999 p. 149

<sup>3</sup> Sen, Amartya, *op cit*, p. 150

when treated within the political, social and cultural context. It must also be recognized that these multiple dimensional aspects of economics are also intertwined.

12. While the Asian economic miracle remains to be marveled by people all over the world, most analysts, however really doubt Africa's capacity to replicate the Asian experience unless current national and global social and political conditions are dramatically changed.

13. Unlike the popular argument, The South East Asian countries were able to register a high level of economic development not because governments in these countries put limit on the participation and empowerment of the people. But, rather, the economic success of these countries is attributed, by some experts in the field, to a set of factors, which are uniquely historical and part cultural. It also helps to note here that the West considered these countries as the front in the war against communism during the cold war. This meant, among many other things, a large capital injection to the economies of the south East Asian countries in an attempt to contain the growing threat of communism.

14. According to some analyst, the recent economic crisis faced by much of these countries is linked directly to the lack of transparency and accountability both in the private and public sectors<sup>4</sup>. Finally, the lesson that came out of their experience is that it is futile to build a viable and sustainable economy without a clear linkage to ethics and moral values that are embedded in democratic principles.

### **III. Policy implications of participatory development**

#### **(a) Issues**

15. Participation has a defined purpose in development and it also has its own approaches to development.

16. *Participation as a means* - participation is viewed as a process where a development agency or institution executes its projects with the cooperation and involvement of the people. In such situation, participation becomes the means whereby such initiatives can be more effectively implemented. People's participation is organized by an external agency and it is seen as a technique to ensure the progress and effectiveness of the program or project. The term 'participatory development' is more commonly used to describe this approach. This approach appears to be widespread and used by the major donor institutions and essentially promotes participation as a means of ensuring the successful outcome of the activities undertaken.

17. *Participation as an end* - participation is seen as a goal in itself. This goal can be expressed as the empowering of people in terms of their acquiring the skills, knowledge and experience to take greater responsibility for their development. People's poverty can often be explained in terms of their exclusion and lack of access to and control of the resources, which they need to sustain and improve their lives. Participation is an instrument of change and it can help to break that exclusion and to provide poor people with the basis for more direct involvement in development initiatives.

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<sup>4</sup> Charles P. Oman, OECD Development Center, Technical Papers No. 180, Corporate Governance and Development, Sept. 2001

18. The critical issue here is that people's participation in development is concerned with two things:<sup>5</sup>

- *Structural relationships* and the importance of developing people's capacities and skills to negotiate and to seek the resources and changes which they require in order to improve their lives; and
- The *methods and techniques* whereby local people can be brought to play a part and to develop a stake in development programs and projects. Both purposes are of equal importance.

19. The former seeks to secure a longer term and sustainable development for poor people; the latter is crucial in providing immediate access to the benefits of Development.

20. Participation has now come to be recognized as an absolute imperative for development and poverty reduction efforts. Indeed, even multilateral institutions, such as the World Bank, have signed on to this imperative as witnessed by their insistence on involving broad-based participation by civil society and the private sector in all operational steps, as one of the core principles to be met by countries in developing a comprehensive development framework (CDF) or a Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP).

21. Despite all the efforts by development specialists, their still remains strong views both within and out side of governments, which do not look at building participatory approaches to policy design favorably. Some of the arguments they raise against participation are the following:

- Participation costs *time* and *money*; it is essentially a process with no guaranteed impact upon the end product. Participation can greatly add to the costs of a development activity and therefore its benefits have to be carefully calculated;
- Processes of participation are irrelevant and a luxury in situations of *poverty* and it will be hard to justify expenditure on such a process where people need to be fed and their livelihoods secured;
- Participation can be a *destabilizing* force in that it can unbalance existing socio-political relationships and threaten the continuity of development work;
- Participation is driven by '*ideological fervor*' and is less concerned with seeking to secure direct benefits for people from development activities than with promoting an ideological perspective into development; and
- Participation can result in the *shifting of the burden* onto the poor and the relinquishing by national governments of their responsibilities to promote development.

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<sup>5</sup> Refer to UNDP Guide Book for an extensive discussion on the subject

22. Indeed, there is no definitive study that would indicate that the way out of underdevelopment and poverty is through participation. Nonetheless, experiences of the Past few decades clearly indicate to the various positive implication of adhering to policies based on participation. Among these are:

- People's participation can increase the *efficiency* of development activities in that, by involving local resources and skills, it can make better use of expensive external costs;
- It can also increase the *effectiveness* of such activities by ensuring that, with people's involvement, they are based upon local knowledge and understanding of problems and will therefore be more relevant to local needs;
- Participation helps to build local *capacities* and develop the abilities of local people to manage and to negotiate development activities;
- Participation can increase *coverage* when local people are able to assume some of the burden of responsibility and thus help to extend the range of activities of a development activity;
- Participation can lead to better *targeting* of benefits to the poorest via the identification of key stakeholders who will be most affected by the activities;
- Crucially participation can help to secure the *sustainability* of the activities as beneficiaries assume ownership and are willing to maintain its momentum; and
- Participation can often help to improve the status of *women, minorities and disadvantaged groups* by providing the opportunities for them to play a part in development work.

23. Fundamentally, participation should be intrinsic to all public programs so that governments do not run the risk of generating programs that are divorced from the interests of the people, and because even good programs tend to be more costly and less effective if not designed and implemented with appropriate participation. The call for strengthened participation by the citizenry in Africa has been energized by a number of factors including:

- (i) The earlier expansion of the role of the public sector without a commensurate improvement in the mechanisms for the involvement of the people or of users;
- (ii) Evidence of recurring failure in some public programs on account of their alienation from the intended beneficiaries.

24. Participation, however defined, does emphasize the decision-making role of the citizenry or a community, including the private sector and civil society groups. It expands the political space available for meaningful interaction between various levels of governments and stakeholders. In Botswana, for example, amendments to the Constitution cannot be done

by parliament alone. A referendum is required with a simple and specific question, pertaining to the proposed amendment, being put to the people for a vote of "yes" or "no". In that same country, the government utilizes the traditional village kgotla to consult with citizens on important policy issues including district and national development plans.<sup>6</sup>

#### **b. Poverty Reduction and Participation**

25. In a recent statement, Executive Secretary of UNECA, K.Y. Amoako, noted that there *"...is clear evidence that democracy is equated with high growth: and that good governance is synonymous with very high growth. This is true for the resource rich countries as for others not so rich"*. The ECA's Economic Report on Africa 2002, released in July of 2002 seems to re-enforce the above statement. The report indicated that African economies grew by an unexpected 4.3 per cent in 2001. This was significantly higher than the 3.5 per cent growth rate registered the previous year (2000) <sup>7</sup>.

26. In response to the question - why have some African countries performed so much better than others? The report identifies the following factors as part of the answer: Sound economic policies and a judicious use of available resources supply. Good governance, political leadership and efforts to curb corruption provide another part. The report goes further to highlight the economic conditions of the following seven countries: South Africa, Zimbabwe, Ethiopia, Kenya, Guinea, and Nigeria.<sup>8</sup> The interesting picture that emerged out of the seven-country analysis is that those countries that are on the way to widening freedom and the political space to include people, and countries that have managed to resolve conflicts are the ones that have registered significant economic growth. And as one may expect, the countries with poor economic growth are countries, which are the furthest from democratic governance and popular participation.

27. In Africa, bad governance and the subversion of basic human rights and freedoms have eroded the capacity of a number of states to sustain economic growth and address poverty. African governments, as do all governments, have a duty to ensure that there exists a relationship of trust between themselves and their people, and to empower those who are most affected by bad governance and poverty.

28. There is a growing body of literature that point to the positive correlation between economic growth on one hand and participation and democracy on the other. The box below cites some of them.

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<sup>6</sup> UNECA, Guidelines for Enhancing Good Economic and Corporate Governance in Africa, May 2002

<sup>7</sup> Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), Economic report on Africa, Tracking Performance and Progress, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, 2002

<sup>8</sup> Africa Recovery, Volume 16 No. 2-3, New York, September 2002

are not ends in themselves, but means through which economic and corporate governance can be brought to function to ensure stability and broad-based, equitable, and sustainable development.

**c. Civil Society and Participation**

30. In recent years, Africa has witnessed a rise in the number and the active role played by civil society organizations. Thousands of organizations including women and youth movements, professionals organizations, traditional welfare societies, non-governmental development organizations, religious associations and other non-state actors – engaged in self-help, welfare, humanitarian and development activities have sprung up all over the continent. These organizations are considered legitimate partners of the state and private sector and essential components of responsive democratic governance and sustainable human development. In fact, many analysts argue that no continent, is in need for a strong civil society greater than in Africa where the institutional environment is extremely weak; poverty and underdevelopment is overwhelming; globalization has weakened the capacity of the state and private sector; and peace, security and stability are lacking.

31. Although CSOs are considered legitimate partners of the state in development and governance, little is known about their makeup, capacity, comparative advantages and the value added they bring to the participatory development and governance processes. Also, relations between governments and civil societies have been varied across the region. While some governments have collaborative working arrangements with CSOs, many are suspicious of their motives and unconvinced of their comparative advantages and the value added they bring to the development goals of nations.

32. Because of the importance of the role that CSOs play in development, it is essential that they be more publicly accountable for their activities. For example, Ethiopian NGOs have recently adopted codes of conduct for effective self-regulation. The codes focus on the importance of "...transparency and accountability and the need to ensure that the NGOs are truly representative of the people whose lives they affect". While the responsibility for broadening the political space to include civil societies lies with the state, the civil society, however, should also bear the responsibility of putting its house in order to be an effective institution capable of bringing changes.

33. Thailand's experience in involving the civil society in the drafting the country's constitution could set an example of how CSOs could contribute in meaningful way on matters that affect the lives of everyone (see box below).



**Participatory democracy at work—drafting Thailand's new constitution**

In drafting Thailand's new constitution, civil society organizations insisted on and were given the opportunity to make substantive inputs. The Constitutional Drafting Assembly was itself a participatory body, with 99 members—76 representing the country's different provinces. Civil society organizations offered suggestions to the assembly on two occasions. In addition, 28 organizations active in democracy met regularly in early 1997 to formulate draft resolutions on the new constitution. Another set of recommendations was published jointly by the main networks of non-governmental organizations (NGOs).

private organizations, the Coordinating Committee on Rural Development (with 300 members), the 28 democratic organizations, the Political Reform and Civil Society Group, the Women and Constitution Network, the Labour Organization of Thailand and the Regional People's Forum for the Constitution. These initiatives were complemented by others that broadened the debate on the new constitution through mass media campaigns, and by public hearings organized in Bangkok and all the provinces.

Source: UNDP, *Human Development report 2002*, Box 3.14

**d. Government and Participation**

34. Participatory decision-making is a major element of good governance. Through their participation in decision-making processes, citizens and other stakeholders are empowered to hold governments accountable and enforce compliance with the rule of law and greater transparency; and governments are enabled to respond to the voices of the people. This is a mutually beneficial process that generates the benefit of stakeholder ownership of decisions. Moreover, participatory decision-making leads to a much more inclusive democracy which either delivers or maintains an environment of peace and stability.

35. Improving participation in decision-making requires the support of the state. In many African countries there can be found national citizens' groups. Unfortunately, they tend to be more representative than participatory.

36. Participation is much more effective and has better chance of succeeding when practiced in a framework of vibrant and responsive representative structures covering both rural and urban areas and including traditionally excluded groups such as women. Past studies about participation reveal that poverty mitigation projects, as well as social development programs, for example, that take a participatory approach, are more successful than those based on hierarchical structures.

37. On the other hand, governments must be careful and take steps to prevent participation from undercutting the responsibility of representative government and weakening its accountability. Moreover, the participatory groups themselves should function in a transparent manner and not allow powerful elite individuals and groups to take advantage of the conditions to further their own interests<sup>9</sup>.

38. Participation as a fundamental right and the role of the government is also articulated in *The Inter Parliamentary Union's Universal Declaration on Democracy* (see box below). The

<sup>9</sup> UNECA, *op cit*

declaration states that democracy is based on two core principles: **participation and accountability**. The document also recognized the importance of building appropriate institutions that would mediate and maintain equilibrium between society's competing interests.

**Key principles of democracy—the Inter-Parliamentary Union's Universal Declaration on Democracy**

In 1995 the Inter-Parliamentary Union assembled experts from various regions and disciplines to develop an international standard on democracy. Building on this work, the Universal Declaration on Democracy was adopted in 1997. The declaration starts with basic principles. Democracy is a universally recognized ideal, based on values common to people everywhere regardless of cultural, political, social or economic differences. As an ideal, democracy aims to protect and promote the dignity and fundamental rights of the individual, instil social justice and foster economic and social development. Democracy is a political system that enables people to freely choose an effective, honest, transparent and accountable government. Democracy is based on two core principles: participation and accountability. Everyone has the right to participate in the management of public affairs. Likewise, everyone has the right to access information on government activities, to petition government and to seek redress through impartial administrative and judicial mechanisms. Genuine democracy presupposes a genuine partnership between men and women in conducting the affairs of society. Democracy is also inseparable from human rights and founded on the primacy of the law, for which judicial institutions and independent, impartial, effective oversight mechanisms are the guarantors.

The declaration sets out the prerequisites for democratic government, emphasizing the need for properly structured, well functioning institutions. These institutions must mediate tensions and preserve the equilibrium between society's competing claims. A parliament representing all parts of society is essential. It must be endowed with institutional powers and practical means to express the will of the people by legislating and overseeing government action. A key feature of the exercise of democracy is holding free, fair, regular elections based on universal, equal, secret suffrage. An active civil society is also essential. The capacity and willingness of citizens to influence the governance of their societies should not be taken for granted, and is necessary to develop conditions conducive to the genuine exercise of participatory rights. Society must be committed to meeting the basic needs of the most disadvantaged groups to ensure their participation in the workings of the democracy. Indeed, the institutions and processes essential to any democracy must include the participation of all members of society. They must defend diversity, pluralism and the right to be different within a tolerant society. Democracy must also be recognized as an international principle, applicable to international organizations and to states in their international relations. Democracy is always a work in progress, a state or condition constantly perfectible. Sustaining democracy means nurturing and reinforcing a democratic culture through all the means that education has at its disposal.

Source: Human development Report 2002, box 2.3, p. 55

**e. Africa's past experience with Popular Participation in development and way forward**

39. Across the African continent, democracy is spreading and more and more people are seizing opportunities to participate in decision-making processes. Those processes have included national and local elections and memberships on boards and agencies that have been created through decentralization, for example.

40. However, in the context of good governance, and the building of a more effective state that is closer to the people, many African countries still need to do a great deal more to promote better participatory decision-making. In several states, the smooth running of

elections, for instance, is still problematic with scores of people, invariably, being disenfranchised. Electoral reform therefore still looms large in Africa and should be seen in the context of political pluralism.

41. A casual glance of the African governance landscape would also reveal mixed results with some countries making significant progress toward democracy while a great majority of them making little or no progress. A number of free and fair elections have taken place in the last decade with a wide participation by the people. Some have also made successful transition from military and authoritarian to civilian rule. However, the majority of African states remain very weak and fragile. They lack the judicial, legislative and other institutional capacities, which are pre-requisites for the development of democracy and participation. Under the pretext of building a strong and effective state that works to benefit the people, authoritarian regimes often take control of governments. These governments are quick to disregard human and civic rights and democracy claiming "...democratic processes create disorder and impede efficient management that countries must choose between democracy and development, between extending political freedom and expanding incomes."<sup>10</sup>

42. There are also other factors for this sad state of affairs. Top among them are the endless war and conflicts that continuously rage in the continent. War and conflicts are an affront to the basic human dignity and human and civic rights. It destroys all the institutions that protect the rights and privileges of people among which is the right to live and work in peace and security. The armed conflicts in Sierra Leone, Liberia, between Ethiopia and Eritrea, the civil wars in Rwanda and Burundi, The Congo and recently the crisis in Cote d'Ivoire have all contributed significantly to the reversal of the small gains made, particularly in the early nineties, in the promotion of democracy and popular participation.

43. Conflicts and war aside, African governments have done very little to encourage and facilitate the process. People are kept as far away as possible from the government with no means of influencing policy formulations or modalities of implementation. Having no access to government, people and their organizations are faced with serious information constraints, therefore, even where there exist limited forms of political expressions, they are unable to take advantage of the situation to influence policy making.

44. Another factor that is cited for the poor performance of the development of participation is the Capacity constraints of development actors. The major development actors mentioned in the Charter lack organizational and institutional capacities to play effective role in development. Therefore, the state with relative strength in organization and human resource, as compared to other sectors of the society, tends to monopolize the decision making process. Furthermore, governments do not see any political incentive in adopting participatory process. The perception that participatory approach is residual of economic growth still predominates the thinking of leaders of African governments. Therefore, attention is given more to issues that are believed to have direct economic impact. Such views are put to practice as if economic policies have a neutral impact on individual or collective rights, or on social or human relationships.

45. Perhaps the few encouraging aspect in participatory development progress in Africa, in the last decade or so, is the increasing involvement of international development partners in pressuring governments to respect civil and political rights, adopt anti-corruption and

<sup>10</sup> UNDP, Human Development Report, Oxford University press, 2002, p. 56

accountability measures, improve justice systems and open up the political space. The multilateral financial institutions, in particular, have realized the high cost associated with lack of democracy and citizen participation. In recent times financial institutions such as the World Bank have built into their lending policy the concept that "...democracy is essential for attaining sustainable development and in defining the content and process of economic and social development".

46. The introduction of PRSP by the World Bank is seen both as method and technique to bring the people into and make them active participants in the process. PRSP takes the form of a document that is prepared by the country government and civil society including the poor-all under the guide of Bank-Fund teams. Working in partnership, the stakeholders analyze the incidence, nature and causes of a country's poverty, who the poor are, and define strategies for overcoming poverty with specified policy and expenditure targets. The primary objective of PRSP is to achieve a strategy that will be "locally generated and owned" and developed through "wide participatory dialogue" focused at both the micro and macro policy-making levels. Furthermore, the PRSP process should also "encourage accountability of governments to their own people and domestic constituencies rather than to external funders" so that the "the poor become active participants not just passive recipients"<sup>11</sup>.

47. New African development initiatives such as NEPAD need to learn from the wealth of experience accumulated over the last two decades both in Africa and in other parts of the developing world. It would also help to evaluate, in connection with participatory development, the experiences of other major developmental initiatives launched in Africa. Here, we are also referring to initiatives such as *The Lagos Plan of Action, Re-launching Africa's Economic and social Development: The Cairo Agenda for Action*, and *The United Nations System-Wide special Initiative on Africa*. Institutions such the ECA could also make significant contribution to popularize participatory development by highlighting and promoting some of the best practices in participatory development practiced in African countries.

#### IV. Monitoring and Evaluation of Participation<sup>12</sup>

48. If the promotion of people's participation, in one form or another, is to be an explicit objective (of a development program or project), then both its outcome and effect will need to be both **monitored** and **evaluated**.

49. If the objective of a project is to encourage ownership and responsibility, then it will be important to monitor **how** people's participation in the project evolves over time from an initial more passive involvement to eventual active participation and responsibility. Over the past decade there has emerged an approach to M and E, which is not based exclusively on the measurement of physical or material objectives, but which seeks to *explain the changes* which are occurring as a result of a development project. Participation is both a process and an abstract concept and, while we can attribute quantitative dimensions to some of the activities involved (e.g. attendance at group meeting), these are inadequate in explaining the

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<sup>11</sup> Refer to the following document for a critical analysis of PRSP  
<http://www.focusweb.org/publications/2001/THE-WORLD-BANK-AND-THE-PRSP.html>

<sup>12</sup> Significant portion of this section is taken from the UNDP Guidebook on Participation, Chapter 4, Monitoring and Evaluation

nature, quality and extent of the resulting participation. In other words, in the M and E of participation we will be concerned not only with results which are *quantitative* but, more importantly, with processes which are essentially *qualitative*.

50. The key to the M and E of participation lies in the emerging concept and techniques of *qualitative evaluation*, which is based on the assumption that projects are dynamic and evolving and not simply following a predetermined direction. Qualitative evaluation takes us 'beyond the numbers game' and identifies the key characteristics or phenomena which could illustrate a process of participation and systematically describes and interprets activities and changes which occur in these. Qualitative evaluation is by definition:

- *naturalistic enquiry*, that is the study of processes as they occur rather than on the basis of pre-determined and expected outcomes;
- *heuristic*, in that it is subject to continuous redefinition as knowledge of a project and its outcome increases. It evolves by observable changes being followed up and new questions coming to the fore. It builds toward a comprehensive understanding of the activities being evaluated;
- *holistic*, in that it sees the project as a working whole which has to be understood from many different perspectives;
- *inductive*, in that it seeks to understand outcomes without imposing predetermined expectations or benchmarks. It begins with specific observations and builds towards a general pattern of outcomes
- Indicators of participation will need to be both *quantitative* and *qualitative*; quantitative indicators to measure the extent and the magnitude and qualitative indicators to describe and to explain the nature and quality of the participation which has occurred. The following is a composite list of possible indicators of a process of participation which is drawn from a range of project level examples:

#### **Quantitative Indicators of Participation**

- Improved and more effective service delivery
- Numbers of project level meetings and attendance levels
- Percentages of different groups attending meetings (e.g. women, landless)
- Numbers of direct project beneficiaries
- Project input take-up rates
- Numbers of local leaders assuming positions of responsibility
- Numbers of local people who acquire positions in formal organisations
- Numbers of local people who are involved in different stages of project

### Qualitative Indicators of Participation

- Organisational growth at the community level
- Growing solidarity and mutual support
- Knowledge of financial status of project
- Concern to be involved in decision-making at different stages
- Increasing ability of project group to propose and undertake actions
- Representation in other government or political bodies with relation to the project
- Emergence of people willing to take on leadership
- Interaction and the building of contacts with other groups and organisations
- People begin to have a say in and to influence local politics and policy formulation

51. The above are not a model list of indicators of participation; they are far too many and are presented merely as examples of the kinds of indicators which could be used. The two critical issues are:

- (i) to work with the **minimum number** of indicators which could give a realistic understanding of the evolving process of participation, and
- (ii) to determine the indicators on the basis of the *characteristics* and *purpose* of the project.

52. It is believed that the 2<sup>nd</sup> Meeting of the Committee on Human development and civil society will identify its own set of indicators to monitor progress in participation in Africa. The above is presented more as an example of indicators of participation and not as a definitive guide to measuring participation.

53. Participation is not merely about outputs and results; it is more to do with *change* in such things as organizational capabilities, people's attitudes and behavior, institutional growth, differential access, the perceptions and reactions of other stakeholders and people's relationships with those who have power. It is a critical dimension of development, since the changes, which it could bring about in the political, economic and social aspects of poor people's lives are immense.

## V. Conclusion and recommendations

### Conclusion

54. The right to participate in development is an alienable right of all people and not a privilege granted by governments or political parties. The philosophy that development is a purview of governments and the elite class still dominates the thinking among policy makers in Africa. This distorted conception of development is, by in large, could be traced to the practices of colonial rule.

55. Traditional Africa generally relied on mass consensus to make decisions on matters affecting the community. Even though traditional rulers and elders enjoyed respectful place in the community, the fact is, more often than not, they relied on people's opinions and views in decision-making. Popular participation is, therefore, not an alien concept that is far removed from Africa's history and experience. Adopting this tradition and making it effective in the modern world is a challenge facing African development specialists

56. In conclusion, it is when poor people are allowed to exercise their choice and right to improve their environment that real changes can be realized. And for these to happen people have to be empowered. These calls for the removal of formal and informal institutional barriers that prevent people from taking action to improve their well being individually and or collectively—and limit their choices. Thus, empowerment and participation may be defined as an expansion of assets and capabilities of poor people to participate in, negotiate with, control and hold accountable institutions that affect their well being.

### Recommendation

57. Following are some suggestions and should by no means be taken as an exhaustive list of recommendations in mainstreaming participatory approaches in development.

- The right to participate should not be the residual of economic growth and market transactions. The *"grow now and do social justice later"* approach need to be challenged as participation need to be an integral part of growth and development.
- The goals set in "African Charter for Popular Participation in Development and Transformation" issued in Arusha, United Republic of Tanzania in 1990 need to be revisited by the development community to identify areas requiring further intervention.
- Nepad recognizes the need to *"develop clear standards of accountability, transparency and participatory governance at the national and sub-national levels"* and commits to developing *"appropriate diagnostic and assessment tools in support of compliance with the shared goals of good governance."* Civil society community and other stakeholders need to ensure that the above commitment is translated into concrete reality.

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