

Public Participation in Development Projects:  
The case of the Grassroots Initiative  
Support Project in Lesotho

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## DECLARATION

I declare that this thesis, unless specifically indicated to the contrary, is my own original work.  
It has not been submitted before for any degree or examination at any other university.

N. M. Otachi  
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## ACRONYMS

BEDCO	Basotho Enterprise Development Corporation
CIDA	Canadian International Development Agency
CTA	Chief Technical Advisor
DAO	District Agricultural Officer
DDC	District Development Committee
DDS	District Development Service
DRDO	District Rural Development Officer
EC	Economic Community
ESAP	Extended Structural Adjustment Programme
FAO	Food And Agriculture Organisation
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GNP	Gross National Product
GOL	Government of Lesotho
ILO	International Labour Organisation
MOA	Ministry Of Agriculture

MOHA	Ministry Of Home Affairs
MOP	Ministry of Planning
NCO	National Coordinating Officer
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NOC	National Operations Committee
NPC	National Project Coordinator
PS	Permanent Secretary
RDA	Rural Development Assistant
SIDA	Swedish International Development Agency
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNV	United Nations Volunteer
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
VDC	Village Development Councils
WDC	Ward Development Councils
WHO	World Health Organisation

## INTRODUCTION

### *Socio-Economic Perspectives*

The last few decades have witnessed rapid increases in rates of economic growth in many Third World countries. The benefits of this progress have been concentrated within urban areas, among the middle income groups, and the rural elites such as the traditional land owners and newer commercial farmers. The remaining mass of the poor have not been able to share significantly in the fruits of national expansion.

The problems of rural poverty continue to be pervasive obstacles to balanced growth. The World Bank (1993) has estimated, for example, that about 85% of the 550 million people who live in absolute poverty (defined as having an annual income less than US \$50), live in rural areas. Some 75 percent of this total are concentrated in Asia, Africa, and Latin America.

In sub-Saharan Africa, 95 percent of the population live in the countryside, most with an annual income of under US\$100 (Lele, 1990). The extended droughts and associated problems experienced in recent years have no doubt substantially escalated rural poverty in this region. Generally speaking, urban and rural income differentials are large, with an average city earnings in some countries being up to nine times those in the country side (Lipton, 1977).

Apart from levels of absolute poverty and marked income differences, other social indicators reveal the gross disparity in living standards, common to most Third World countries. Rural areas are provided with poor health and educational facilities, inadequate domestic water and electricity supplies, partly as a direct result of lack of government investment in basic services due to the general neglect of small scale agricultural producers. Social problems are more evident in rural areas. These include high rates of malnutrition, illiteracy and ill-health, which are reflected in lower life expectancy rates. Life expectancy in poor countries is lower in rural areas and higher in middle income nations which are characterized by urbanisation.

### *Factors Contributing to Poverty*

The precise extent of rural poverty is often difficult to ascertain for several reasons. Firstly, published global and national poverty statistics do not usually distinguish between urban and rural areas except at the most general level. This may be partly for political reasons as the governments are often reluctant to admit their inability to deal with the problem. The other explanations are to be found in the methodological problems of collecting accurate data on income and other social indicators in countries which are ill-equipped for this purpose.

A second and related factor could be an underestimation of the true extent of rural poverty, what Chambers (1981) refers to as the unperceived nature of poverty. These are the poorest communities which are often the most isolated, their members illiterate, having little contact with the world of officialdom, and the least likely to join associations such as cooperatives or rural syndicates.

The professionals working in rural development programmes also do little to break down the barriers of communication. They tend to be urban and middle-class oriented, who prefer to issue commands and travel in style rather than attempting to empathize with their clients, the rural poor (See Chambers 1983).

On the basis of a study undertaken on co-operative projects without external assistance in rural villages in Sierra Leone, Midgley (1987) concluded that rural communities are not disinterested in rural development. Although they experience many difficulties, they are capable of spontaneous involvement with development activities.

Drawing on his experience of Latin America and the Caribbean, Heskim (1991) observed that poor people know what they require to satisfy their interests, meet their needs and solve their problems. Although they make mistakes and are not always aware of the obstacles they face, they learn from experience and this strengthens their capacity for co-operative endeavours.



Brohman (1996:270-276) has observed that a lack of local institutions, as properly constituted authorities linked to district, regional and national decision making bodies by legal and administrative procedures are a major source of poverty. Aziz (1981) has a similar view, citing the Chinese commune and Israeli Kibbutz as examples of the ideal of local participatory institutions for less structural grassroots associations, organised for community development activities and popular involvement.

Many proponents of community participation are sceptical of representative democracy and its possibility of providing meaningful opportunities for the involvement of the masses in the political affairs of developing countries. Drawing on the theory of neighbourhood democracy, they advocate the creation of small scale institutions for the realization of political aspirations in the villages and urban neighbours of the Third World.

The views of the proponents of community participation are also infused with populist notions which are often characterized by the belief that virtue resides in the simple people, who are in the overwhelming majority, and in their collective traditions. Common to all of them is the idea that ordinary folk are badly done by. They may be perceived to be the victims of economic disruption or thought to suffer from the arrogance of an inflexible bureaucracy or it may be believed that they are neglected by an indifferent establishment. In these circumstances populist movements arise to champion the causes of the masses and to rally their support.

Populism has considerable influence in development studies and also in the developing countries where it has been embraced by political leaders, intellectuals and technocrats. Worsley (1973) points out that the development plans of Third World countries are strongly populist in character, placing emphasis on co-operative and communitarian forms of social and economic organisation, stressing the values of self-help and self-sufficiency.

The mixed economy is accepted and the proclaimed objective of the plans is to promote agriculture and improve the living standards of the masses. Modernization through the promotion of heavy industry is regarded as inappropriate to the needs of the people. Kitching (1982) observed populism in a similar way, pointing to its major exponents in recent times as including

President Nyerere, officials at the ILO concerned with the World Employment programme, Schumacher and the Intermediate Technology Development group ( Lipton,1977).

The influence of populist ideas on the advocates of community participation principles are a primary expression of populist ideals in the Third World today. As in populism, current community participation theory suggests that ordinary people have been exploited by politicians and bureaucrats and that they have been excluded not only from political affairs but from the development process in general. Their simple way of life is threatened by the forces of modernization and rapid social change and they face increasing hardships as a result of economic and political mismanagement. By organising local people and making them aware of their situation, community participation provides a mechanism for mobilization of the masses and collective means of address.

### *Institutional Framework*

Donor agencies involved in rural development are aware that rural development projects are likely to fail unless the beneficiaries are actively involved in the formulation, planning and implementation process of such projects, and resources are made available on a timely basis.

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), recognizes that beneficiary participation and close co-operation of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) working at the grassroots level are necessary ingredients for sustainable development. The rural development strategy of the Lesotho government is also based on the premise that planning and decision making processes need to be decentralized. In this view, the basic units of decentralization should be empowered to assume responsibility for the administration of local level development programmes to enable the rural people's active participation in the decisions affecting their lives.

It is within this context that the project, Grassroot Initiative Support Project (GRISP) was developed. In the case of the GRISP project, the strategies require partnerships between the UNDP, United Nations Volunteers (UNVs), the government and the target groups.

As formulated, the project aimed at building the capacity within the target groups, most of whom were women (given the migration patterns in Lesotho) to ensure their active participation in the development process.

Donors themselves now realise that poverty alleviation will continue to be an elusive goal if their own projects do not yield concrete benefits in a context of world-wide cuts in international aid. The UN agencies such as the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), World Health Organization (WHO), Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), and World Food Programme (WFP) in Lesotho are more convinced than ever that its assistance must be used properly. The heads of UN agencies, have therefore, selected some of their own community development projects for review. The goal of the study is to document project successes and constraints so as to draw conclusions concerning lessons learned and best practices that have emerged at all stages of the project cycle.

The experiences of NGOs' suggests that the greater a community's involvement in identifying and prioritising their needs, the greater the likelihood of project success. This generalisation masks the reality that most of the community development projects have had mixed results from the beginning. Although some have achieved their immediate objectives, many have not. Even so, many community projects end up in disarray: denuded hills, crumbling roads, broken water supply systems, health clinics without drugs, idle youths without jobs, and government (after years of donor support) still do not appear to have succeeded in training personnel, developed institutions or even the will to address the fundamental needs of their people.

The project beneficiaries have also become frustrated after being subjected to imported ideas of how they should develop, turning people away from risk aversion strategies which have served them for centuries. Poor farmers have sometimes become poorer after government and donors persuaded them to adopt mono-crop systems which fail during the drought season; to use fertilisers which they could not afford following devaluations; embarking on micro-enterprises which failed to deliver reasonable returns because of poor marketing. Or to reorganise government even when the increase in recurrent expenditures generated by projects could not be observed by the government once donors funding ended.

### *Background and Purpose of the Study*

The Kingdom of Lesotho is completely surrounded by South Africa. It has a total land area of 30,000 square kilometres of which 90 percent is not arable. It is not well endowed in natural resources, which presents various economic problems and has contributed to a high dependency on South Africa.

Lesotho has a population of about 1.6 million people of which 90 percent reside in rural areas. About 65 percent of all households earn income from the agricultural sector. The rural poor who constitute 30-50 percent, fall below the poverty line, of whom 60 percent are women, with an increasing numbers of unskilled unemployed youth.

About 30-35 percent of the population find employment in South Africa as migrant workers, whose remittances contribute to nearly half of Lesotho's Gross National Product (GNP).

Overall, there is a rapid decline in environmental conditions, particularly of the arable land, at the same time the future of migrant labour remittances as a revenue earner is declining due to the on-going changes in South Africa.

It is against this background that the government of the Kingdom of Lesotho has undertaken to revitalise its policies and strategies to meet these challenges for the 21st century. Among these strategies are the five year development plans, effecting Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAP), and enhancing international co-operation, collaboration and support.

As a part of the agreement of SAP, constraints were imposed on the growth of the budget and on the size of the civil service, as a result of which many positions were frozen, while the programme improved. Economic performance and the underlying social conditions were addressed.

## *Methodology*

A qualitative approach has been adopted in this study (Neuman 1997). Face-to-face interviews with the United Nations officials and volunteers, government officials from line ministries directly involved in the project, relevant NGO representatives and individual members of the communities from the study area have been conducted. The advantage of qualitative techniques can not be over-emphasised in this study. It facilitated not only easy acquisition of the needed information, but also a clear understanding of the intricacies and linkages involving donor assistance, the government and the community in an endeavour to realise their objectives and expectations. The specific activities are described as follows:

### Literature review:

The literature review basically involved extensive search, reading and articulation of relevant issues to the study area. This was complemented with the actual information from the various reports sourced at the Lesotho UNDP headquarters and relevant government reports.

### Face to face interviews:

The researcher was able to do face-to-face interviews with senior officials of UNV, as well as those in the field, government representatives of the DDCs, NGOs, officials of the VDCs as well as community members, using a semi-structured questionnaire. The interviews were conducted in the following proportions: International agencies - ten officials, Government Ministry level - eight officials, DDCs - ten officials, VDCs - nine officials, WDCs - twelve officials.

### Limitations:

One of the limitations of the face-to-face interviews was that some of the interviewees tended to misunderstand the purpose of the information being gathered. This made some of the interviews much longer than expected. In addition, self-pride also cause people to be uncomfortable with discussions on their poverty either in public or with an outsider.

## CHAPTER ONE - LITERATURE REVIEW

### *Historical*

Pinpointing changes in development thinking with historical accuracy is quite impossible. There is no doubt that the mid 1970's was the beginning of a fundamental shift from the domination of a modernisation paradigm of development thinking (and intervention) towards a systematic search for alternatives. This re-examination has correspondingly influenced process. The literature which accompanied this search reflects the periodical emergence of new strategies that have greatly influenced the thinking process of the past major strategies towards more responsive ones, such as community development, integrated rural development and provision of basic needs. This re-examination focussed on a new form of analysis of dependency theory that has influenced the dimensions of development intervention.

The work of Haque (et al)(1977) was instrumental in providing a new framework of development alternatives which has influenced later researchers such as Pearse and Stiefel (1979) and Bhasin (1982). The issue of development alternatives had become increasingly capital-centred as opposed to people-centred. Authors such as Rahman, Fuglesang and Fals Border have contributed to building up a theoretical understanding of alternative approaches to development (see Burkey, 1993).

These authors have stressed the need to adopt the basis and approaches of development in the context of social and economic improvement of rural development. Interestingly, in development thinking two broadly different schools of thought have come up with two different views about the concept of participation as a transition element, in tackling the problems of poor people in developing countries.

One school of thought sees participation as a key element to meeting human resource needs, in development efforts, which previous development planners had overlooked. The contributions that people would make and the skills that they would bring to development programmes are very important for the success of the planned activities.

If the human efforts are to be incorporated within such programmes and at the same time facilitate people to participate in them, there is a higher possibility that such programmes will be more successful, sustainable and contribute to desired levels of development. }

Another school of thought sees participation in a different dimension, as being more linked to the structural causes of people's poverty, rather than as an input into development programmes. They argue that people are poor because they are excluded, isolated and have little influence upon the forces which affect their livelihoods. Participation is the process whereby such people seek to have some influence and access to resources which would help them to sustain and promote their living standards.

Development 'alternatives' have become the central issue of concern. In order to build and construct physical development, these must be approached in such a way that people have a central role and authority to control resources.

Schumacher (1973) observed that development does not start with physical goods, but with peoples' education, organisation and discipline. Without these elements resources remain available, but underdeveloped.

Development is seen as a process of humanisation, where people are expected to be central to any form of development process. Any genuine development ensures participation of the people in a mutual learning experience, involvement in decision making, resource control and planning and implementation of project initiatives. According to Julius Nyerere in Tanzania (1973) people cannot develop if they are being herded like animals. People can develop when they are involved in making decisions on matters that concern their lives. This enables them to address their needs, and find equitable solutions on how to move out of poverty.

### *Participation*

The concept of participation has three broad interpretations as follows:

### 1) Participation as empowerment

Over the past five years the notion of participation as empowering rural people to make their own decisions on matters concerning their livelihoods has gained increasing support.

In 1979 the World conference on Agrarian Reform and Rural Development emphasised the decentralization of power to local institutions as an important component of participation (Burkey, 1993:67).

Participation enables local indigenous poor people to make decisions by themselves and to take actions which they believe are significant to their development initiatives and which would sustain their livelihoods. The relation between power and participation is widely recognised when conducting programmes and projects at grassroots level.

### 2) Participation as a contribution

The dominant interpretation of participation in development projects in the Third World sees participation as a voluntary contribution by rural people to identifying programmes and projects, such as water supply, forestry, health, infrastructural and natural resource conservation.

These programmes emphasise rural people's contributions in participation as fundamental to success. The management process under which they are presented form a core participatory element as characterised in the project management.

### 3) Participation as organisation

There is an argument across the range of development literature and practice that organisation is a fundamental instrument of participation. However, there are some controversial disagreements on the nature and evolution of organization. The special consideration lies between the origin of the organisational format or arrangement which serves as evidence for participation. These include cooperative movements, farmers' associations and worker's unions which seek to



encourage rural people to determine its nature and structure. In this respect Verhelst's (1990) work shows how formal organisations like cooperatives can emerge as a result of a participatory process in small communities in rural areas.

### *Obstacles to Participation*

The practice of participation does not occur in a vacuum. On the contrary, it is subject to both negative and positive influences. Since the greater part of this study deals with factors, elements and phenomena which can support and strengthen this practice, it would be useful to review the kind of factors which can affect the process of participation negatively. This is because studies are suggesting the obstacles that may frustrate the attempts of participatory development. In some cases, these studies list the kinds of problems that participation confronts, and suggests the appropriate solutions to how these problems can be overcome. However, we can examine these obstacles to participation under a number of headings.

#### 1) Structural obstacles

The political climate within a particular country can encourage this process, equally in different circumstances it can constitute a fundamental obstacle where the prevailing ideology does not allow citizens' comment, but prefers to maintain direction and decision making concerning the state's affairs strictly in their hands.

Such prevailing political climates would not be conducive to a genuine participation process. Furthermore centralised political systems place less emphasis upon mechanisms of local administration and decision making, thus reducing aspirations of participation. Similar obstacles arise between the policy of the state and development projects which seeks to organise rural people in order to influence this policy in terms of redistribution of political and economic power.

It can be seen therefore that the nature of the political environment within a particular state will have a strong influence on the potential meaningful effect of local participation. More specifically

the existing legal system within a country can seriously frustrate the efforts to promote participation. These can be seen in two ways: first the legal system may have an inherent bias in the way it is conducted and through which the status quo is maintained. On the other hand, many rural people are unaware of their legal rights and the legal services available to them. Many legal services do not seek to impart education to rural people, who remain largely ignorant, and excluded from the effect of laws which are supposed to benefit them. In some instances the legal system acts against the rural people. According to a study conducted by the ILO on different groups of worker's associations as to how their efforts to form an organisation to represent their interests have been frustrated, it was found that similar legislation had delegated powers to the government regarding unlawful assemblies, and this has played a determining factor in forming organizations by the rural people. This is unfair practice and against the wishes and aspirations of the participation processes.

## 2) Social obstacles

In many developing countries rural people have been dominated by local elites. These imply that the rural poor have become accustomed to living according to decisions and initiatives of their leaders. This state of affairs has been reinforced in many instances by handouts and actions which have not motivated them to be involved in participation in any development initiatives or project activities. Many rural people therefore tend to accept the status quo and their position in a framework in which economic and social arrangements are maintained and controlled by a minority.

Any participation occurs within a particular context and will be influenced by economic and social forces that stimulate some kind of reaction to rural people as a new idea to their accustomed role in development activities.

## 3) Administrative obstacles

Many developing countries have centralised government which encourages an administrative structure which is by nature opposed to people's participation. This structure retains the control

over decision making on resource allocation and the information and knowledge which rural people require, if they are to play an effective role in development programmes.

It is a common observation that such an administrative structure tends to have a negative impact on the whole notion of people's participation. Planning of development programmes and projects is also centralised. Government planners are professional groups who do not practice at a local level. Most rural development planning takes place in ministries, in urban areas and beside that, there is no genuine aspiration to develop this responsibility effectively.

Many of the developing world's administrative structures are centralised by nature and anti-participatory. Korten and Klauss (1984) see the main obstacles to participation as centralised decision making, inappropriate attitudes and skills of project staff, and frequent transfers of personnel. Such a process makes participation difficult to effect in rural areas.

### *The argument for participation in development*

Despite the fact that much effort has been taken with the notion of participation in development, not everyone is convinced that it will automatically produce good results. Many planners argue that there are risks when involving people's participation. These include a series of arguments which see participation as an extremely useful instrument for promoting development projects. These arguments are more fundamental in nature because they are localised and expressed in terms, which when combined together, constitute a significant argument.

#### 1) Effectiveness

Participation makes projects more effective as an instrument of facilitating rural development project initiatives which are externally supported. Participation allows these people to have a voice in determining the objectives of management and to make local knowledge and skills available. Many projects which have been initiated have not been effective because the local people are not encouraged to participate so as to enable them to be more effective. Participation ensures that work is done effectively and the management of the project is eventually and

smoothly transferred to local people to take responsibility for development activities.

## 2) Efficiency

Participation enables the people to utilise the available resources in a project which encourages the local people to be responsible in conducting project activities which are sustainable. It helps to minimise misunderstanding and disagreement between time and energy spent by professional staff, convincing people of a project's benefits, if rural people are to take the responsibility for its implementation. Participation ensures efficient use of the resources available to some development projects to yield some good results.

Efficiency in the project enables the local people to acquire administrative and management skills to run project activities effectively.

## 3) Self reliance

Self reliance refers to the positive effect on rural people, while involved in participating in development projects. Participation helps to destroy the notion of dependence and promotes self awareness and confidence. It induces rural people to examine their problems and enables them to think positively about solutions. Participation is concerned with human development, increasing people's sense of control over issues which affect their lives, and it enables them to build their capacity to plan, make decisions and implement project activities.

Participation enables participants to prepare themselves at regional, local and national level and it destroys people's isolation and lays the ground for them to have more substantial influence on development activities, programmes of dependence and control over resource management for their livelihoods.

## 4) Coverage

Many governments and donor agencies supporting development projects reach only a limited

number of people. In many cases, delivery services have contact with only a fraction of the rural population. Participation enables the extension of the project to bring more rural people within the direct influence of development activities. It helps to increase the number of rural people who potentially can benefit from development.

#### 5) Sustainability

Many development projects fail to sustain themselves once the project support is withdrawn. Participation is seen as the process that ensures the local people maintain the project standards long after assistance is withdrawn, and that there will be an acceptable flow of benefits from the project's investment after its completion. Participation is regarded as a sustainable momentum of development in rural areas of developing countries. It helps to fight against injustices and encourage equality in sharing of project benefits with the aim of promoting and sustaining self reliance and enhancing the living standard of poor masses in rural areas.

#### *Issues concerning participation*

Participation in development is a complex phenomenon and cannot be presented in universally accepted terms. Analysis of participation therefore raises a whole range of issues, from different authors, which are significant to an understanding of development.

Uphoff (1986) has identified some key issues regarding participation in project design and implementation. These are clarity, realistic objectives, and bureaucratic orientation. He concluded that issues of this nature should be given attention to strengthen participation at the project level.

#### 1) Who participates ?

If we relate this question back to the earlier emergence of participation as a new major strategy in development, we link with broadly defined groups of the rural poor. The widespread conviction of previous development strategies which stressed the need for sustainability through involvement of the rural people has stimulated this affected majority to participate in development

programmes.

The question of who participates is connected with an understanding of participation and the objectives of the intervention. For instances, in many developing countries the broad mass of poor or oppressed for whom the struggle to exist and survive is a critical issue with resource allocation and immediate benefits cannot be overemphasised. Participation as a process is concerned with such people. Participation therefore facilitates the process of, or entry points to, raising or identifying ways and means through which the affected majority can seek responses to their needs, to enable them to promote their living standard to a sustainable livelihood thus alleviating poverty.

To interpret the concept of participation and practice, one should reflect on the various levels of interactions in development initiatives as where people are gradually involved in actual planning, designing and implementation of activities with guidance from outside, where people are the centre of development.

Through the intervention of an outside agent, an organisational base is created that becomes an instrument of participation. In group activities, in the form of discussions, meeting groups identify social and economic activities that are the means by which people develop further entry points to participation. In many development projects several projects are repeated concerning structural problems facing the rural poor. Over a decade ago there was a growing concern on how to develop strategies to encourage rural women to participate in development activities affecting them, since they were the most excluded and disadvantaged group in development initiatives. Participation provided an entry point to dealing with this problem.

The emphasis upon women in development has created enthusiasm to improve their economic status through small income generating activities and ensure their participation in economic growth.

The United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) has placed a lot of emphasis on the need to develop clear strategies, which are understood by women, to enable them to

participate in the development of a sustainable economic base, promote their status and to enable them to have better living standards through development programmes.

## 2) Participation and the government

A disagreement of opinion around the practice of participation concerns the significant role of the government and the extent to which it can create obstacles to participation. The controversy stands because of two main reasons. First: according to the analysis conducted by some studies, government and its bureaucratic machinery seems to be hostile to the whole notion because of an unwillingness to reduce central power (by devolving decisions to the local level), and an unwillingness also to support the demands made by rural people for the radical changes required to find a lasting equitable sustaining solution to poverty eradication.

Another issue in many regions, it could be argued, is that any genuine government has the basic instruments for maintaining the status quo, and on the other hand, the capacity to improve the quality of poor peoples lives.

A genuine government is one concerned with participation, and whose bureaucratic procedures are decentralised to local level planning structures which assume responsibility for the administration (at local level) required to initiate a variety of infrastructural and social development projects of its own (United Nations 1981).

There is little practice to date to suggest that many governments have committed themselves in supporting mass involvement in development programmes. For instance, in several countries such as Ethiopia, Philippines and Tanzania, their national policies encourage people's participation in nation wide programmes. Harambee in Kenya and decentralization in Nepal seek to establish a basis for participation (see Brohman 1996).

But most governments in the developing world are signatories to the 1979 WCARRD declaration on the central role of participation in rural development. A few would declare publicly that they were opposed to participation. Midgley (1986) argues that a major failing of the advocates of

participation has been the assumption that the state has little positive role in promoting participation programmes.

The state is the prime initiator and promoter of development efforts in most developing nations. In the field of social development, the state provisions have been growing rapidly. Analysis of popular participation should deal with these realities and incorporate them into a comprehensive approach to be able to promote the component of statist and participatory development (Midgley, 1986).

Hollnsteiner (1978) has argued that the community-based development strategies of China, Ethiopia, Tanzania and Vietnam, in contrast to 'capitalist' developing countries, are unlikely to become organised for self-reliant development. Numerous authors have cited China's commune as an ideal form which offers its members full democratic rights and promotes effective development.

Governments are the main protagonists of top-down approaches to development and the objects of critical comments on effectiveness of big donor supported projects. Most developing world governments have blemished records in project management, lacking commitment to genuinely involving people in decision making and action concerning their development.

Many government sponsored programmes fail because of the centralised state apparatus with its bureaucratic procedures, inefficiency, inflexibility and remoteness from rural areas. This problem is the major impediment to effective development in developing countries. The United Nations (1981) observed that the tendency towards centralisation in many developing countries has created a complex administrative system which has caused development to move with a slow speed.

We must examine the nature of participation and on the other hand the governments' understanding of the processes of participation as a means to control and mobilise local resources for development priorities.



For a country to develop, it needs rural people with skills, innovativeness and resources necessary to promote national growth and eventuate some genuine decentralisation of power at local level to enable the rural people to have a voice to control their own resources in decision making and implementation of project activities.

### 3) Participation and NGOs

Several writers have argued that non governmental organisation's (NGOs) provide effective opportunities for the implementation of grass root level participation ideals and these are more likely to promote rural development. Many NGOs have a firm commitment to challenge the socio-economic structures which underline poverty and exploitation. NGO supported projects range in size from individual community schemes, with a handful of participants, to middle ranged activities such as the Brazilian fisherwomen's project and regional organizations, Boomi Sena (land army) movements of Maharashtra state in India, where such schemes supported by NGOs are seen to be the mainstreams of rural development.

Many NGOs are still bound by essentially traditional views of development practice and many governments are seeking to promote widespread participatory projects to the local level to be able to promote development in rural areas, among communities who are left behind in development. Voluntary organisations are regarded by many development theories as being politically progressive and more effective in promoting rural participation because they are innovative and adaptive. These NGOs have often come up with new approaches to development projects and reformulation of more ideas to the existing approaches of development literature.

The concept of community participation advocates the involvement of NGOs in rural development rather than statutory organisations in grass root participation. Unlike the state, NGOs seem to be dynamic, flexible and socially concerned. They are usually staffed by people who have a deep personal commitment to humanitarian participatory ideals, and are seldom inhibited by bureaucratic rules and regulations which are accountable to corrupt politicians. They are constantly mindful of their career prospects and concerned how to promote policies and interests of poor people to improve their living standards.

Therefore, external agencies such as NGOs have a recognisable role in the process of participation. Their influence can be seen as a motivation to further action in order to impact on the evolution of a participatory project and its eventual outcome.

### *Expectation and incentives*

Rural people have previously been overlooked and excluded from development programmes because of injustices and inequality in development planning. Policies operating in a top-down fashion do not create a good environment for poor people to participate in development initiatives to enable them to meet their demands. } top down

A question that often arises as the rural people begin to be involved in development, is on the kind of incentive that will be required to sustain this involvement. It is not always possible to predict what aspirations might arise as a result of involving rural people in development initiatives. These could however appear two different ways; first, the understanding of people's expectations and second, people's participation which is often linked with immediate material benefits.

Rural people previously have been receiving few benefits from development projects. They are asked to participate in a variety of ways for their own benefits, but the incentives may not be linked directly to immediate benefits but to more long term solutions to their poverty. }

Participation is seen as a process whereby the previously excluded and vulnerable members of the community could make their contribution to the development process. It also enables them to exert some influence, emerging from exclusion to a more lasting sustainable solution to overcome their poverty. }

Where material benefits are made available, dependable incentives are important in sustaining participation. Projects in the developing world which have sought to obtain people's involvement by offering immediate incentives (eg inputs or credits) have often been faced with situations where participation declines when incentives fail to materialise.

Incentives are thought to stimulate collective action and progress, particularly where there is a favourable political environment. This in turn is expected to promote economic growth which is sustainable to national development.

Where participation is linked with material benefits, which are made available in an appropriate form and manner, care should be taken to ensure that this does not encourage dependency.

### *Conclusion*

The concept of participation must be emphasised as an integral component of development projects. Many analyses in the development literature argue that it is an impossible task, and unrealistic, to isolate the projects as different phenomena and examine participation on its own.

The concept of participation is a dynamic process. It cannot exist without a project framework. Therefore, the essence of this study was to examine participation in the context of development projects with a clear understanding that projects are the products of a political context. It entails people's interaction with the existing forces such as the influence of development thinking and practice at all levels. Participation today is a major category in both academic and project documents across a range of disciplines.

## CHAPTER TWO - SUSTAINABLE HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

*What and for whom is 'sustainable'?*

Development philosophies over the past years have undergone profound changes. Emerging from this is the current world wide emphasis on sustainable human development for both people and the environment. The post-World War 2 approach to reconstruction of developing countries, focussed mainly on increasing economic productivity and stimulating growth with a view to modernisation (Fincham and Auerbach, 1991). More emphasis was placed on the provision of social and physical infrastructure such as roads, bridges, schools and clinics and large scale agricultural manufacturing outputs.

However, by the 1970s it was realised that if development policy was to address the needs of the poor, it could not rely on economic growth as a kick start. This is because the market and 'trickle down' effects proved inadequate for redistribution to the benefit for the poor. The emerging concern for the poor has led to the application of the basic-needs approach to development.

This approach aims to improve the quality of life of the poor by meeting their basic needs, such as access to basic services, education and water supply, and addressing the real concern on how to access produce markets.

Although the objectives of this approach seems to have tremendous merits to bring changes in development, it has failed to provide the means of strengthening organisational capabilities of the poor. However, this basic-needs approach has emphasised community participation in the development process. This changing perspective has also recognised meeting basic needs as important in enhancing people's capacity to participate in the social, economic and political life of the nation (Korten and Alfonso, 1983). Furthermore, the role which they can play in the decision making process, especially on matters that are directly concerning their livelihood, is equally enhanced. Consequently, the basic-needs approach allows people to develop a capacity through which they can address their needs and improve the quality of life in terms of sustainable

Basic  
Need  
approach

human development (SHD).

Another important process which emerged in development philosophies is known as an increasing world wide concern for the rapidly declining resource base (Fincham & Auerbach, 1991). The universal dimensions of the environmental problems began to be emphasised along with an urgent call for sustainable resource use. It is on this basis that the strong link which exists between poverty and environmental degradation was identified. However, it was found that straightforward economic development is a small part of the solution to poverty and environmental degradation. Any development emphasis on management technology and economic resources without human development components, leads to a strong dependency. SHD focuses on linkages such as: appropriate education skills and employment; addressing basic health and poverty; and as means to improving productivity. SHD emphasises a link between empowerment and action for the poor. It does not however recognise when the government does things to people which they can do better by themselves. This weakens their capacity for self-governance, economic survival and prioritising their needs. Any development initiative which does not regard sustainable human development as a key factor to successful development, especially rural development, is short of being meaningful. To be a meaningful sustainable process, the beneficiaries must be actively involved in the formulation, planning and implementation of their development activities.

dependency

#### *The Government of Lesotho and Sustainable Human Development.*

The Government of Lesotho (GOL) has in the past embarked on large scale agricultural and rural development programmes with positive macro level results. However, the benefits do not appear to have reached the rural communities, as expressed in the strategies of decentralisation and rural community level popularisation of development efforts. In 1986, the government established a network of District Development Council (DDCs), Ward Development Councils (WDCs) and Village Development Councils (VDCs), respectively, with an explicit aim of involving the rural communities more actively in development planning and management of local resources (Show 1993). The development councils structure has since been recognised by the government as the structures through which all ongoing and community level socio-economic

network

development activity should emanate and be channelled.

In this structure the government has regarded the DDC / VDC as playing key role in its decentralisation efforts and requested the UNDP and other donors to assist in strengthening it with inputs in the form of technical and capital assistance to enable it to promote and facilitate development at the rural community level. The intention behind decentralised efforts is to ensure that policies for development are translated into action. Much of the effort is often lost before the beneficiary is reached when development programmes are centralised as in decision making and implementation, by subordinate agencies. According to the pre-determined schedules and procedures, the chances of development programmes failing has often proved to be very high (Korten and Alfonso, 1983). This is because such programmes and plans are generally made by individuals who are far removed from people and their needs. The supportive policies are in this respect implemented by the structure which is more responsible to central direction than local reality.

Cases of some rural communities in Lesotho having approached the government for assistance to implement water supply projects are not new. Unfortunately, they have often waited without response for more than ten years as experience has shown. The reason is not because the responsible government is unsympathetic, but due to the overwhelming demands for the services and pre-scheduled planning.

As long as the bureaucracies appear to remain passive to the needs of the people in the poor communities and conditions which contribute to their state of poverty and lack of empowerment, these communities will remain distrustful of a government which appears to do little to serve their interests. Decentralisation is not only important from an efficiency perspective but also from the perspective of fighting against poverty. Most of the Lesotho population is scattered in mountains and remote villages and it is essential that these communities are able to play a more active role in mobilizing and managing resources for development.

To achieve its strategy of decentralisation and involvement of the rural community population in development efforts, the government established a network of district, ward and village

development councils in the early 1980s (United Nations, 1990). The aim of these structures in the rural areas were to facilitate a bottom-up development approach from about 2,500 to 3000 VDC's who were elected by village communities with every ward chairman being a member of the VDC of the ward district council (WDC), making a total of 24 elected members at this level. The WDC's liaise with the district development councils (DDCs) who have access to the rural development officers and other line ministry staff in the area. Village Chiefs are automatically members of the village development councils (VDCs) as well as, ex officio members of the WDCs.

The role of the VDCs as gazetted in 1986 and 1991 is to plan, formulate, implement and maintain the development activities and social services in the area of their jurisdiction. They are also responsible for raising funds, stimulating participation through the DDC's, informing the government about local priorities. It is the DDC's responsibility to ensure that extension services of the various line ministries are coordinated at the district level to minimize duplication of development activities and services rendered. They also monitor the extent of services provided by the wide range of line ministry's extension workers in the field of agricultural, rural development, health nutrition, etc. and ensure that bridges of cooperation are built among the representatives in understanding the liaison role and decentralising link between national development policy and community level development.

COORDINATING  
ROLE

The development objectives of the government structure at the local level are found in the mission report of the World Bank on Lesotho. A senior economist, R.C. Show cautions that decentralisation can have more symbolic than real value in the rural development programmes for national growth(1993). Many government and donors inputs are designed to emanate from the DDC/VDC decentralisation structure in cooperation with the line Ministry extension services. However, the effective implementation of DDC/VDC structures is limited due to its lack of adequately trained and experienced staff, who do not have the ability to plan and implement development activities. As for the line Ministries extension services, shortcomings are vast due to inadequate backup or support in areas such as availability of adequately trained counterparts and transport requirements (United Nations, 1993).

TRAINING

The upgrading of overall capacities of these structures are a critical area for any decentralisation initiative to be effective as an area for intervention which aims to promote sustainable human development at grassroots level.

*The Grass-roots Initiatives Support Project and its objectives*

A cluster evaluation report conducted by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), United Nations Volunteers (UNVs), International Labour Organisation (ILO) and the Government of Lesotho (GOL) in 1990 concluded that the existing rural development support programmes had many positive aspects. The VDC structures were identified as having tremendous potential in assisting communities to participate in their own development activities and ensure that these activities were maintained.

The line Ministry extension services through the district development councils (DDCs) was also acknowledged by the evaluation team. However, a fundamental reason in achieving many tangible results on the ground was attributed to the fact that decentralisation structures were designed on the assumption that the DDC/VDC's had the inherent capacity to fulfil their roles. The UNDP's Grassroots Initiative Support Project (GRISP) was proposed and approved in May 1991. The object of this project was to assist in facilitating the decentralisation of development planning in Lesotho. In accordance with the government's long stated decentralisation policy, this was to be achieved through empowering rural people by allowing them to prioritise their needs and to plan initiatives and participate in the construction of small scale social development initiatives under VDC authority. The initial intention of the project was to stimulate micro-economic initiatives and infrastructural projects.

Donors have expressed willingness to consider supplementing the funding of projects originating from GRISP as well as financing some components, such as training of rural institutions and organisations from which mutual advantages can be gained. The UNDP project "Africa 2000" collaborates with GRISP in a constructive way since the project has not fielded personnel. The project training programme has empowered rural communities to develop micro- projects. Unfortunately, the available funds are not enough to satisfy all the incoming requests. As a result



during the project implementation a policy decision was taken to limit the amount set aside for social infrastructure and to reserve a portion for income generating activities within the GRISP projects.

### *The context of the review*

This review represents an analysis of the GRISP programme in terms of the degree of success which the project has had in meeting its key objectives, as follows:

- Facilitate the process whereby the rural communities are able to participate in the planning of their own development initiatives.
- To build a capacity amongst the members of the community to identify and prioritise their needs, generate and decide on appropriate development activities, mobilize human, financial and material resources and implement, monitor and account for their micro projects and finally, build a capacity with government at both national and district level to coordinate and manage the centralised planning.
- Ensure that any development capacity is to realise and execute development programmes which will be sustainable once technical assistance is withdrawn from the project

### *Methodology*

In accordance with the terms of reference, the methodology of the review took the form of field visits, structured and unstructured interviews and discussions, which were held during the field visits with the VDCs and members of the community who participated in the GRISP micro-projects, GRISP fieldworkers and United Nations Volunteers (UNVs).

Informant interviewing is seen to be a critical tool for any social impact analysis. This is because it provides qualitative data about how people understand their own situation, their needs and

hopefully, aspirations. It also provides quantitative information about issues such as finance and labour. Informant interviewing depends on competent translators whose behaviour is appropriate to the situation. The GRISP national fieldworkers were able to fulfil this role. Also the GRISP fieldworkers have been living in the GRISP villages working with the communities for two years, which implies that VDC members and the community are familiar with them.

It must be noted that during group discussions one can never capture the voice of the community because certain dominant voices are often being heard more than the others. It is also possible that individuals may not wish to express the opinion which is contrary to popular feeling. However, in the group discussions, held for the purpose of this review, it appeared to draw general agreement amongst people themselves, particularly where there is a complex issue that needs to be elaborated regarding the statement made by others.

#### *Caveat*

One of the risks of informant interviewing is that it is possible the interviewers may misunderstand the purpose of the enquiry (Finisterbush et al, 1990). A few of the people in rural communities, when asked of their experience with GRISP regarded the interview as a possible means of providing funds for the future projects. Self-pride may also cause people to be uncomfortable with discussions about their poverty either in public or with outsiders. There are no possible answers to this problem since it is not possible to simply demand the correct information which one requires.

Unfortunately, the range of districts which could be visited was limited due to time constraints and the more remote could not be surveyed. However, projects like Leribe, Maseru, Mafeteng and Mahale's Hoek District were visited, and discussions were held with the United Nations Volunteers (UNVs) and fieldworkers from the areas which could not be visited for survey information concerning the GRISP project and operation.

## CHAPTER THREE - GRISP DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

### *GRISP at Central Government*

GRISP project was formulated in response to the Government request for assistance in developing the capacity at the local level and to implement projects of the main institutions.

Initially a National executive committee (NEC) with the Principal Secretary of Planning as the chairperson, was established to determine the scope of the project and to identify the primary target groups. The functions of these committees is to identify and incorporate ministries, and to manage GRISP micro-project fund. In addition, a National coordinating office (NCO) was set up within GRISP and managed by the project Chief Technical Adviser (CTA) who has a national counterpart, the National Project Coordinator (NPC). The role of the NCO was to coordinate project activities between the various line ministries, United Nations Volunteers (UNVs), District Development Councils (DDCs) and donors. NCO also took the responsibility of supervising the 12 UNVs and 30 National fieldworkers.

The UNVs who play a vital role as the District coordinators in the GRISP project were required to work closely with the VDCs and DDCs. The Village Development Councils (VDCs) and DDS are administratively placed under the Ministry of Home Affairs (MoHA), while the UNVs and the National GRISP fieldworkers are administratively under the Ministry of Planning (MoP) which has no representation at the district level throughout the life-span of the program. However, there has been ongoing discussions as to whether the UNVs and the GRISP central coordinating unit had been appropriately located within the MoP. However, the initial decision was that the MoPs functions are closely linked with the immediate objectives of the project, while strengthening the potential of both District and coordinating Ministry (MoP), to plan and implement grassroots initiated projects to facilitate rural development nation wide.

### *GRISP at District Level*

Since the primary aim of GRISP was to strengthen the capacity both in government and at the

community level, the program placed a strong emphasis on the education and training of VDC elected representatives. The VDCs structure provides a framework of action through which initial mobilization of the community takes place, as well as being the grassroots "bottom-up" linkage between the Local and Central government. Its main effort is to improve the viability of the VDCs as a catalyst for mobilizing and managing micro-level resources. GRISP was operative on a selective and experimental basis in all ten districts of the country and has been working with over 100 VDCs.

GRISP project aims to strengthen the links between the VDC officials and the line Ministry field officers who operate at the district level. VDC members are thus informed of issues such as health, education, food security, water and sanitation and how to bring their village level concerns to the attention of district-level technical officers. This strategy was aimed at ensuring that the villagers do not remain on the receiving end of the governments technical expertise, but instead to have greater access to and ownership goals and expertise or skills.

During the initial stages of GRISP's involvement several basic district training workshops were held. The intention was that these workshops would help to explain the philosophy of the GRISP project and its relation of the development councils and development agencies.

#### *GRISP at Community Level*

GRISP aimed to promote local ownership micro-projects by encouraging the community to contribute either in the form of cash, building materials or labor. However, the levels of contribution were not uniform. as they differed from project to project, while those communities who were not able to contribute cash, supplied labor where they were able to do so.

The projects, especially road construction are by design labor intensive. In this respect, community participation in the form of labor, is not only significant for fostering ownership, but it is also relevant from a poverty perspective. GRISP was however, able to promote the community's development initiatives by using the abundant resource in the rural areas. Accountability was ensured by entrusting the project funds to the VDCs or the relevant elected

project committee members in the rural areas. Accountability was ensured by entrusting the project funds to the VDC's for the purpose of instilling book-keeping skills among the members under GRISP supervision. This proved to be a significant component of empowerment, promoting local people to contribute their development experience. This enables ordinary individuals to acquire the capacity to know how to handle the management of their resources to meet their basic needs.

### *GRISP Project Procedure*

The following steps are typically followed during GRISP project span:

- Introduction of GRISP workers to the Chief and introductory discussions with VDC's regarding the project;
- A meeting between GRISP and the village community to explain the significance of the project;
- Prioritization of needs arising from within the VDC discussions held concerning the reasons for holding one need more important than the other so that needs could be ranked with maximum understanding and agreement between all individuals;
- Feedback and discussion with the village members of the hierarchy of needs;
- Formulation of an action strategy in determining what projects are needed to yield the desired action;
- Electing project committees from amongst the VDC and the community and identifying key personnel who are to sustain the project;
- Consultation with technical advisors regarding the costs and viability of the project;

- Budgeting for the project activities and identifying the level of assistance that can be provided by the members of the community;
- Drawing from the GRISP micro-fund and opening a bank account;
- Participatory monitoring and evaluation of the project against a work program which has been prepared by the community (depending on the project this is done on a daily, weekly or monthly basis);
- Official handing over of the completed project to the community.

### *Village Development Councils Training*

Although the VDCs' roles and responsibilities were officially defined and documented in the Government gazette, few VDCs were in a position to put this into effect for the following reasons.

- There are no training packages at hand to help them to achieve their roles;
- They lacked resources to support their roles;
- The community were not sufficiently aware of the process of democratic elections and there were cases where community members did not participate in the voting, but the Chiefs selected the VDC members themselves.

Donors and NGO's had reservations about working with the VDC structures since they did not always feel that they were fully representative. The VDC training, which is a unique element of the GRISP project, aims to promote development initiatives both at community and local government level. The training activities involved a process-oriented component which focused on strengthening the links between the VDC and government technical ministries in the district. The coordination of the grassroot development initiative both at village and district level was an

attempt to influence resource allocation in favor (Van de and Wallis 1982) of the rural development. VDC training aimed to strengthen management capability by focusing on organization and division of work with the VDC structure as well as VDC's role in mobilizing and organizing the community. VDC members were also trained in managing the financial matters and human resources for the project. The training sought to enhance development capacity of the VDC by explaining the principles of participatory development as well as teaching to improve local amenities and social services monitoring and supervising projects.

### *GRISP and Non-government Organizations (NGOs)*

The outreach of GRISP to NGOs has been focused on Thaba Khupa Ecumenical Centre (TKEC), an NGO that provides 18 months residential training to young school dropouts. The training provides employment and operational skills such as in small scale farming, metal and leather work, sewing and weaving as well as home economics.

The project assigns two UNVs to the Centre to assist in strengthening the management capacity of administrative and financial manpower (composed of an Administrative Director and Program assistants (22) and 8 invited Technical trainers). The board of Directors from the Christian Council of Churches and the Lesotho Ecumenical Society for Development and Peace, oversee the overall management of the centre. The neighborhood community where the centre is situated is within easy access of agricultural commodities provided by TKEC but the concern of the village and church authorities was expressed regarding the problem of self-employment opportunities of graduates due to lack of financial assistance.

Assistance to the other NGO's by GRISP has been limited to establishing contact and cooperation in planning and coordination. Regular liaison has been set up with Lesotho Council of NGOs (LCN) who are also members of the NEC and NOC.

While the LCN has recommended the training initiative by GRISP for rural based NGOs, it is apparent that no coherent procedures for coordinating the activities of LCN and the project have been elaborated. LCN emphasizes its coordination role rather than being an implementing agency

at grassroots level. It aims to promote cooperation within GRISP in its training function.

Besides assistance to TKEC, GRISP has founded women's cooperative NGOs in Berea, Mafeteng and Mohale's Hoek districts in the construction of multipurpose centres. The assistance to Mohale's Hoek Cooperative was only for repairs of the existing centre. However, it is questionable whether the utilization of the centres will help to contribute as a source of generating income without additional operating capital from other sources such as sewing and knitting equipment and materials. The other problem relates to the marketing of finished products. Collaboration between GRISP and other Departments of line ministries e.g Cooperative Department of MoHA will be essential in tackling these problems. The rural department of MoHA, Basotho Enterprises Development Corporation (BEDCO) of the Ministry of Commerce and Industry (MCI) and the LCN mission, view the main usefulness of the centres as accommodating trading workshops for communities at village level.

Links with other NGOs and their representatives has been limited to consultation during the planning and implementing phase on the GRISP national executive committee and the funding of GRISP micro-projects management unit (MMU) of the European Union.



## CHAPTER FOUR - PROJECT CASE STUDIES

Various GRISP micro-projects in both key and satellite villages of the districts were visited. Informal discussions and interviews were held with the members of the community through the GRISP fieldworkers. Discussions were held with UNVs and fieldworkers from the remaining districts. The environment in which GRISP projects operate were different from village to village. There may be variations in the degree to which the village development committees (VDC) have been involved in participatory projects in the past. The other variations include, the level of work, the existing basic services and the level of cohesion among the community. Members may also differ in their understanding of the project. All these factors will affect the operation of GRISP project.

A number of GRISP projects are outlined in the following section, which highlight the level of participation by the community, the extent to which GRISP succeeded in empowering community's, and evaluates 'sustainability'.

### *Small Development Can Make A World of Difference: Litsaneng Borettole-Mafeteng District.*

The small village of Litsaneng is located nearby the GRISP key village of Koranta in Mafeteng district. It is a small village of 84 people, who are mostly aged. The community does not have their own VDC, but falls under the jurisdiction of Ha Koranta where GRISP has been assisting with the implementation of a water supply scheme and a clinic.

The Ha Koranta VDC requested the Litsaneng villagers to identify their priority needs. Their water source is a stream three kilometres from the village which runs dry during dry season, and is often polluted during summer months. As a result of these problems and the fact that gardening was impossible due to lack of water they unanimously identified a water supply project as a priority.

### **Participation**

The Letsaneng community elected a water committee who undertook training with the GRISP field staff on project proposal and implementation.

A contractor was introduced to the committee and they drew up project proposals on the basis of the quotation. The villagers all agreed to contribute M5.00 per household which was deposited into a bank account. The community then suggested that they should establish a water scheme maintenance fund by contributing M10.00 each towards the projects. All the people in the community worked in the construction of the scheme by supplying stones, water, sand and contributing labour. The job was completed within a period of six weeks.

When asked why they had participated in the project, the unanimous response was “this scheme is for our own good”. Access to water had been a real problem for this small community and everyone, particularly the women, had been forced to fetch water daily from a long distance as a traditional task.

### **Empowerment and Capacity Building**

The community of Letsaneng demonstrated that they have the capacity to identify and prioritise their needs, and they are in agreement regarding the priority of their future projects. It is also apparent that this water scheme has fostered a strong capacity to take development concerns further. People felt encouraged by being able to attend to this water supply need and they now have more time available to focus on other matters. They are enthusiastic about starting communal piggery and poultry schemes as a means of generating income. With this income they hope to build a borehole which will be used to irrigate vegetable gardens.

They also demonstrated the capacity to mobilise human, financial and material resources through their physical contribution to the scheme and by setting up their scheme maintenance fund.

When asked if they had learnt any skills from their involvement in the project, they responded by explaining that the borehole hand pump had broken down and they immediately fixed it by themselves, using the skills they had from GRISP. This clearly implies and demonstrates that the

community were encouraged by these new found skills.

## **Sustainability**

The members of this small community said that they had learnt some valuable concepts from GRISP which would help them with their future projects: to work together without compensation towards the common goal. They also learnt that they are in a position to initiate projects and with the financial training that they received they are now in a position to handle project funds on their own. Some people were confident to advise others who may approach them with the intention of initiating similar water supply project schemes.

### *A Commitment to Partnership : Ha Balokoe Road Culverts-Mohale's Hoek District*

The Ha Balokoe community in Mohale's Hoek is made up of small scattered population of about 400 people. The access road to the village was impassable during the summer season which meant that the community suffered from isolation. The community had on their own tried several times to design and construct some interventions at the point where the road crossed the river, but had been unsuccessful, simply because of the high volume of water in the river during rainy season.

The VDC in this community had worked on previous development projects : Village water supply on borehole installation scheme in 1990, and had also sought help from the Department of Soil Conservation and Tree Planting Schemes (there is a tremendous amount of soil erosion in this area).

## **Participation**

During the VDC training workshop, GRISP staff learnt of the commitment which the community had demonstrated towards addressing their road problem. The Balokoe VDC, requested "if GRISP could assist us with a culvert at the river, we would construct the road ourselves". This illustrated the community's commitment to form a working partnership with GRISP, as opposed to simply providing GRISP staff a list of needs which they hope would be provided for.

Technical advice for this project was provided informally from the district engineer. Labour construction unit (LCU) and the funding of about M130 000 was made available by MMU. The construction began in early 1995 and was completed by May. The majority of the community contributed labour towards the project, carrying materials such as stones and sand, while others received informal training from a builder and helped with the construction.

When asked if there were any aspects which they had appreciated about GRISP, this community came forth with a volley of answers. Said one old man, “we like everything about GRISP”. As with many other communities the people of Ha Bahalokoe really enjoy and feel comfortable with the fact that “the GRISP fieldworkers actually live with them and interact with them”. “We like the people”, they said. Some elaborated that they appreciated the fact that they could approach the GRISP team with problems and that these problems were always discussed immediately and mutually beneficial solutions were found.

### **Empowerment and Capacity Building**

The culvert and 6 km of road was successfully built with the support of the community. The UNV in Mohale’s Hoek places the reasons for the success to the fact that the community were confident in approaching their development needs as partners and not as bystanders. This confidence is synonymous with empowerment.

Although the members of the community expressed regret that GRISP would be leaving, they felt confident that they would be able to initiate projects on their own. They had learnt how to organise themselves and how to work together and knew that they could raise money amongst themselves.

If necessary their future plans include more soil erosion measures, soccer playing ground, a pre-school and some upgrading and maintenance of their water project. These proposals and similar ones which many of the VDCs have come up with illustrate that there is an enthusiasm to continue with their own development initiatives into the future. The capacity, and the confidence, that development matters can be taken in their own hands which has been fostered by GRISP has

ensured this.

## **Sustainability**

In closing the discussions many members of the community wished to ask questions regarding the future of GRISP. It was emphasised that it has always been the intention GRISP that the programme would be continued by the government. The community members asked for a good government response strategy. They expressed concern, explaining that in their experience the government was slow and unresponsive regarding their needs.

The GRISP, UNV and fieldworkers in the Mohale's Hoek district have currently embarked on a process to enhance management skills, focussing on consolidating the training which the VDC had received during the course of their involvement with GRISP. Such intensive consolidation programmes are aimed at ensuring that the momentum of both initiatives is maintained once GRISP withdraws from the area. The district secretary to this area, through his involvement with GRISP, recently presented papers at the Lesotho Catholic Bishop's Conference (LCBC), on elements of organization and community project cycles.

### *A Self Starter Secondary School at Fobane Village-Leribe District*

Fobane village is located in the northern Leribe district, where there are three key GRISP villages and eleven satellite settlements. The village has a sizable population of about 8000 people.

## **Participation**

This village has a successful history of initiating and completing its own infrastructural projects with the assistance of members of the village. A water supply system had been installed, and in addition, an independently initiated project which had successfully been completed took the form of an access road, using funds contributed mainly by the men in the village who had earned money in the mines in the Republic of South Africa and labour contribution from the community.

In 1986 the community initiated another project in the form of a secondary school. This was as a result of the need for the school which was felt by most parents and children. Parents also found it difficult to take their children to the neighbouring villages which had secondary schools but were concerned about the lack of close parental supervision.

The transport fees were high and some children were often forced to walk 8 km to the nearest secondary school. The concerned parents in the community presented their case to the ward chief of Fobane and the district secretary for assistance. In January 1989 the school committee was elected by the community and they forwarded the application to the proprietor of the Lesotho Evangelical Church (LEC) who were able to offer technical assistance.

The school committee discussed means of raising funds with the wider community and agreed that all families would contribute. The construction of a two classroom school began in 1991. The school opened in 1992 with 32 students and 2 teachers.

In 1993 through the ward development councils, the Fobane VDC made an application for financial assistance to GRISP for expanding the school. Fobane was not identified as one of the GRISP villagers simply because the VDC and community villages in Leribe district were not able to identify their needs to enable them to participate in development.

Fobane's application was approved by the GRISP programme and over M57 000 funds were made available to the Fobane VDC and school committee to pay for a skilled builder and building materials. The community contributed manual labour, transport of building materials such as window frames and bags of cements, while those who could not afford such contributions contributed by collecting materials such as sand and stones. During the discussions of the school committee and the VDC, it was confirmed that their experience in community participation is crucial for the success of community development projects.

### **Empowerment and Capacity Building**

Building activities commenced with such enthusiasm that the project was completed a week ahead

of schedule. Besides that, the VDC and school committee proposals for additional extensions were approved and completed. This programme demonstrates a strong capacity to identify priority needs and community efforts to mobilise resources towards meeting needs.

The village development councils (VDC) which were stronger in development projects were encouraged to identify development programmes such as GRISP which train people by involving them in project initiatives as well as giving them the autonomy to handle their own funds. They felt that many more communities would benefit from programmes such as GRISP and expressed regret that the programme was drawing to a close without being extended beyond a pilot project time span.

### **Sustainability**

Despite the fact that participation and cooperation were not new concepts for this village, the VDC, and members of school committee all expressed appreciation for GRISP's approach to development. This implies that they were encouraged and motivated by the experience acquired from GRISP. The VDC has further plans for a community hall and when asked to clarify, stated that this proposal is dependent on outside funding. However, they are quite prepared to raise money again, from within the community, in order to ensure that these proposals go ahead regardless of outside assistance.

### *Problems with Communication and Managing Communal Assets-Mafeteng District*

Ha Patsa village in Mafeteng district is situated near the Wepener road about 2 km from Van Rooyen's Gate. After the GRISP-VDC training, the villagers identified fencing of the community garden as their priority need.

A project proposal was drawn up in the name of "Itekeng Paise Cooperative" and signed by the VDC, since it was GRISP staff impression that all Ha Paise villagers were members of cooperative. Funds were released once the project was approved and fencing materials were made available. However, when the three people arrived to work for the construction, the GRISP

district coordinator convened a meeting to establish the reasons why participation was not integrated within the project framework. The district coordinator discovered that the villagers in fact had no confidence or trust in officials. This was due to the fact that the officials had previously collected money from the villagers for the same purpose, but had misappropriated the funds. Because of such mismanagement the villagers insisted that they could not work at the old fence which was registered under the name of Itekeng Paisa Cooperative. As a solution, the villagers chose a new site.

GRISP staff acknowledged that they should spend more time discussing with community members to create mutual understanding of community dynamics and their development problems in the past. It also becomes clear that they would not believe everything that they were being told at first. From this perspective a series of meetings are necessary to ensure that all views aired are understood and that all people are in agreement to take decisions.

## **Empowerment**

Once the fencing was successfully completed the community of Ha Paisa were motivated with the micro project. They felt confident to tackle a large project and identified a multi-purpose centre as a priority. The building was to serve as a day care centre as well as a community hall and will aim to benefit all residents of Ha Paisa.

Most people contributed to the building of the centre by digging both the building foundations and pit latrines, collecting building material and at the same time preparing food for the skilled builders.

The members of the community who attended the discussions for the purpose of this review explained that they had benefited tremendously from the GRISP training. They had learnt the potential of community participation in development. Due to GRISP micro projects, the process of opening a bank account and being responsible for managing the projects funds had made the VDC members encouraged and they felt motivated.



## **Sustainability**

The VDC and the project committee along with other members of the community are using the communal garden scheme as a means of generating funds for the future maintenance of the centre. They also raise funds from the gardens to pay for further fencing. But only half of the community is contributing towards this scheme. On the one hand, it is understood that not everyone has an interest in communal garden schemes, since the costs and benefits of the scheme are not equally distributed.

However, those who are working in the gardens explained that they liked to do so and were endeavouring to make others more aware of the value of cooperation and participation. They felt confident that they would ultimately be successful in this project.

The Mafeteng UNV and fieldworkers confirmed that communal gardens are not always successful in the long run and people tend to work with far more commitment when plots are individually owned. The district coordinators mentioned that problems do arise with communal assets such as who should keep the keys to the community hall. There are also bound to be many different interest groups who wish to use the facility, and benefit more than the others. However, these types of problems are few as well as being resolvable. They indicate that ownership problems can interfere with the maintenance and the sustainability of a project.

*Working towards a Common Goal : Road Construction from Ha Motsoetla to Ha Lejeha-Maseru District.*

## **Participation**

Following the GRISP VDC workshop, the people from the Ha Matsoetla, Ha Lekota and Ha Lejeha villages identified a good road as the primary need.

The Government Department of Civil Works (DCK) was consulted regarding the feasibility of the labour intensive road construction. They estimated that it would take about 5600 working days to complete a kilometre (1 km) of road with 50 workers in a period of 6 months. The Civil Works

Department was sceptical that people would participate in the construction without any form of incentives such as pay or “food for work”. GRISP uses no incentives since the programme believes in principle that infrastructure itself is the benefit to the community, and ownership of such assets is thus a substitute for the payment.

After consultation with communities, the VDCs of three villages drew up a work programme. Their proposals were approved by the district development councils who forwarded them to the GRISP National Coordinating Office. The project was funded by the Micro Project Management Unit (MMU) of the European Union for purchasing of tools and payment of technical supervision salaries. MMU requires that the community covers 25% of the project costs either in cash or in kind as a means of fostering ownership of finished products.

Workers commenced the road construction in April 1995 using spades, shovels and rollers. Despite the fact that there is no payment involved, there is a wholehearted commitment from the community towards the construction of the road demonstrating an unquestionable sense of ownership. These communities have proved that by working together they are able to construct a road within a record breaking time.

The chairman of the road subcommittee explained that there are a total of 250 people working on the road from the three villages. He confirmed that a daily register is taken as a check. If people are unable to work for a particular reason, they arrange to make up for the lost time when it is convenient.

The road committee members mentioned that the construction of the road was hard, physical and labour intensive. It would therefore be of benefit to the workers if they could receive food as a payment for their labour. However, when asked why it was that the construction had proceeded thus far at a rapid pace without compensation, it was explained that the road was their own project and would be of significant benefit to all of them. For this reason they were anxious to work on the road and see it through to completion.

## **Empowerment**

GRISP's involvement with these communities has certainly highlighted a capacity to prioritise their felt needs. The commitment from the community towards labouring on the road construction has clearly demonstrated that the community had decided on appropriate development activity which is of broad benefit to the people.

### **Sustainability**

The road construction not only facilitates easy access to the villages, but was also a necessary step before any other infrastructural development could take place in three communities. Road infrastructure lays the ground work for many other development projects and income generating activities such as small trading stores, since it facilitates the transportation of building materials goods and produce. Already small retail outlets have sprung up along the completed stretch of road. There is also little doubt after witnessing the enthusiasm for the road building project that other infrastructural or income generating projects for which this road is a means, will be completed with equal enthusiasm and commitment.

#### *GRISP Micro Projects and Future Maintenance : Pitseng Village Leribe District*

Pitseng village, which is a growing point in the districts became involved with GRISP in 1992. After VDC training and subsequent discussions, it became clear that a reliable water supply scheme was a priority need amongst both the community of Pitseng and the surrounding smaller villages. As is common with all GRISP projects, the VDC were trained in project planning, management and record keeping.

The water supply project had government support from village water supply for technical components and was funded M57 400 from the Micro Project Management Unit (MMU) of the European Union (EU). The water supply scheme which supplies 6 villages relies on appropriate technology as much as possible capturing water sources at their spring source and gravity feeding to a collection, point where it is pumped by an existing windmill operated with a diesel engine pump as a backup to a central village. In Pitseng the water supply scheme will serve 12 stand pipes at strategic places.

## **Participation**

The chief of Fobane village explained that from this project they learned of the importance and value of community participation and involvement in development, in fact, these particular micro projects demonstrated that not just one community, but six, are able to combine forces and participate in working towards a common need. All six villages provided manual labour towards the water supply schemes, working once a week from 8:00 am to 1:00 pm on a rotational basis.

## **Empowerment and Capacity Building**

These communities not only mobilised human resources but also financial and material resources. All households which were to benefit from these schemes contributed M12 00 to fund. This was collected by an elected subcommittee within each village. In addition to this, all households are to contribute M1 00 per month towards the maintenance funds, which is collected by the respective water supply sub-committees. Although one particular secretary of a water supply subcommittee was subjected to the appropriate actions for failing to contribute, such individuals should not be banned from using the water from the scheme.

All individuals have gladly contributed labour, time and money towards their water supply scheme. They not only share in songs and dances while they work, but would also share equally the benefits of their project once completed.

## **Sustainability**

The people who were labouring on the water supply project, and a member of the water supply subcommittee explained that they had learnt valuable skills through their involvement in the project initiative and that they were confident that these skills would be invaluable as far as maintenance was concerned.

A sum of M10 000 is left over from the project funds which is kept in a water supply Bank account for the maintenance costs of the diesel pump. This as well as monthly levy, will ensure

that there are necessary financial resources to fund any future repairs and that the community is supplied with water into the future.

The people of Pitseng village have also built a community hall with the assistance of GRISP. The chief of this community explained that they intend to establish communal gardens as means of generating income for the maintenance of the hall. They observed that there was a good market for this type of produce at the taxi-ranks within the town and that this activity will contribute to generating revenue.

### *GRISP Fieldworkers Initiatives*

One of the stated objectives of the GRISP programme was to building adequate capacity both at the grassroot level and within the government. All of the 30 GRISP National Fieldworkers who joined the project in 1992 with an intention of being managed by the Ministry of Local Government once GRISP withdraws have undergone extensive “in house” training during their time with GRISP. Quarterly workshops are held in which all GRISP staff attend regularly to discuss problems and procedures. Most of the field workers have a single focus background such as forestry or social work and thus benefited tremendously from the integrated approach to community development which GRISP emphasises. All fieldworkers confirmed that they had acquired encouraging knowledge and skills about community participation and integrated rural development during their time with GRISP. They conceded that the workshops had served as an essential vehicle for discussion with other GRISP project members. On the whole the calibre of the fieldworkers who had been working on the GRISP programmes is impressive. Many of them are now able to work fairly independently of the UNV’s and some have initiated their own small projects while working with GRISP. The following cases are some of the illustrations of the GRISP workers initiatives, the ability to take initiative was a necessary attribute to ensure that the fieldworkers are able to continue providing support to the communities once UNV’s supervision is withdrawn from the field with termination of GRISP.

### *Botha Buthe Choir Mobilisation*

GRISP fieldworkers, Mr Ntonsaole through his own initiative began to work with the choir of a parameter village, Botha Buthe district. The group consisted of 34 choristers. They entertained people in the area which enabled them to earn a little money, since they did not have proper uniforms or musical instruments.

A meeting was held with GRISPs staff, the VDC and choir members who were encouraged that the choir had the ability to generate its own funds as opposed to seeking outside assistance in form of donations. With the assistance of Mr. Ntonsaole the choir elected a management committee and opened a bank account for the funds which were raised. The choir has since bought uniforms by themselves and contributed towards a multi-purpose community centre. The VDC agree to allocate room at the village community centre to the group which they are now using for practice. Mr. Ntonsaole then assisted the choir in starting up a bread-making project with funding from the Trickle-up programme (USA) and from the choir's own resources.

The work that Mr. Ntonsaole has done is significant since it has demonstrated that groups need not rely on donations. Mr. Ntonsaole believes that efforts in mobilising a group of people in income generating activities have a better chance of Sustainability, if that group have a common unifying purpose. This view was supported by a number of NGOs and government officials, GRISP and UNVs. Further plans are underway, including assisting a local soccer team with organisational issues.

#### *Maseru District-Income Generation Initiatives*

A fieldworkers Ms. M. Phakisi from Roboletse village in Maseru district explained that her training with GRISP had enabled her work to improve in income generating activities. She has also helped the women of Roboletse to establish a revolving credit fund and a poultry scheme. Each member is currently earning about M600.00 every six to eight weeks upon selling chickens.

Ms. Phakisi works with women and expressed in her opinion that they are more interested in these kind of activities than men. One of the members of the revolving fund was recently able to borrow M1000.00 for the purchase of a dairy cow. Ms. Pakhisi also intends to use a section of the

community centre which was financed by GRISP as a sewing hall for the women groups, where one of the women who is a fairly successful dress-maker will be giving lessons to others.

### *Mohale's Hoek-Revolving Credit*

A fieldworker Mr. Thoriso Mpeke from Mahole's Hoek is currently assisting with the re-establishment of a community revolving credit organisation. Some difficulties have been realised among various members who cannot agree on the amount of initial capital outlay since the level of wealth differs. Mr. Mpeke is also currently establishing youth groups. The primary problem is that, although the boys are very enthusiastic their stock tending do not allow them sufficient time for sports. All these initiatives could be viewed as "spin offs" to the GRISP programme.

The fact that the fieldworkers have been working with informed or existing structures, and that there is an income generating focus, has positive implications for the sustainability of the projects. The fact that these activities in other districts began independently of the GRISP UNVs, implies that they should not be jeopardised once GRISP withdraws.

## CHAPTER FIVE - EVALUATING GRISP

### *GRISP and the Government of Lesotho*

The various departments and line ministries within the Government of Lesotho (GOL) have an approach to development which is in accordance with the sustainable human development philosophy promoted by GRISP. For example, they have a policy not to impose soil conservation measures on communities which have not expressed a need in this regard.

The Department of Conservation, Forestry and Land Use Planning changed from its previous approach of working systematically with communities within geographical catchment areas to specifically those with people who express a need to attend to soil conservation. These communities have usually managed to address their basic needs (such as water supply) and are now looking for initiatives which may improve the quality of their lives. Such an approach to development is justifiable on the basis of economic efficiency, since people's contribution towards the maintenance of a project, of which they have ownership, comes naturally. Tree planting schemes work on a similar self-help basis to the GRISP road building projects, as people are given trees for every 500 holes which they dig.

It is clear that the government recognises the need for a participatory approach to rural development, as well as the benefits of decentralised planning, as a means to expedite rural development initiatives. However, many of the rural communities spoken to expressed a low opinion of the government's ability to meet their needs. This indicates that there is either insufficient understanding or commitment within the government to achieve the objectives of sustainable human development in Lesotho, or that the cogs of bureaucracy are impeding the intent in this regard.

Discussions were held with a number of government officials concerning GRISP's operation and its approach to development. Responses were both positive and negative. One comment sums up what has been physically observed by most NGOs and government of the GRISP programmes. "GRISP is one of the rare projects that I have seen since joining the civil services thirty years ago



that works properly and is one of the projects that is addressing the needs of the people”.

Most of the officials spoken to from the government and NGO's recognised that although GRISP worked with the government, it did not have a certain autonomy from the government procedures and this was crucial for its success on the ground, for example, working with the line ministries staff on an informal basis in the field.

It is generally acknowledged that GRISP is well designed in that it went to the people and worked with the people in identifying and meeting their needs. The training which GRISP offered to both VDCs and to the national fieldworkers is appreciated as invaluable and the government has recognised that national GRISP fieldworkers will be an asset for development in the future.

*Has GRISP Built a Capacity within the Government : To Coordinate and Manage Decentralised Planning ?*

The GRISP programme sought to promote devolution of the decision-making process. However, its first step was to create a sound steering committee namely the National Executive Committee (NEC) comprising top level government officials and donor agency representatives, whose function was to determine the scope and modalities of the project. The NEC also initially had responsibility for financial control over the GRISP micro-projects fund, although this was recognised later as being an inefficient function for top level government officials.

This responsibility was thus forwarded to the National operations committee (NOC) which evaluated GRISP's social infrastructure projects. It was intended that the policy formulation would be assisted by two-way information flows between the NEC and the project beneficiaries who could communicate via their local government structure. However, as pointed out in a mid term evaluation of the GRISP programme, the District Development Councils (DDCs) were never provided with a clear terms of reference regarding their role in policy issues.

The mid-term evaluation of the GRISP project (United Nations, 1993) identified that the role of

the district council was confined to project formulation and implementation, with a mechanism for providing the feedback regarding policy issues. The Ministry of Home Affairs (MOHA) members on the NEC would not be expected to be a viable substitute for the DDCs input on the NEC, since it is the DDC's which are physically in the field with the GRISP staff and would have a different perspective.

Feedback from the UNVs who are effectively part of the local government structure was obtained by means of monthly meetings with GRISP management, quarterly reports and training workshops. The mid-term evaluation was discussed with UNVs at the 6th quarterly meeting. However, some of the UNVs were of the opinion that they were not adequately consulted regarding policy matters during the GRISP programme.

### *Continuity*

The Ministry of Planning (MOP) was selected as the implementing agency for the GRISP programme. However, this choice was made on the assumption that there would be a MOP institutional structure existing at the district level. This assumption was unfounded, since the existing district planners were withdrawn soon after the project implementation since they were temporarily operating on donor funded projects.

It was then always the intention of the GRISP programme that the government would recruit district planners who could be counterparts to UNVs. This would have ensured thorough training continuity once the programme was withdrawn. This has not been done due to lack of resources on the part of the government, which implies that potential capacity for planning at the district level has not been developed to a sustainable level.

The mid-term evaluation (United Nations, 1993) suggested that the use of international personnel had not been beneficial to the project, which aimed to develop strong community participation. The evaluation maintains that national graduates should have been recruited at the outset, as replacements for the UNVs who are to be phased out at some stage of the GRISP programme. The question of who would fill the UNVs role may have been avoided. However, this

recommendation is still immature in the light of the shortage of appropriate skilled personnel in Lesotho.

The UNVs coordinators have undeniably performed an excellent function in the GRISP programmes and have been invaluable in the training of national fieldworkers and the village and district development councils have benefited from training in the field of sustainable integrated human development. Some of the UNVs suggested that some of the fieldworkers are now sufficiently well equipped to play the role of district coordinators since their management skills have been improved.

National staff involvement at the central level has taken the form of recruiting a National Project Coordinator (NPC), who is the counterpart of the Chief Technical Advisor to the GRISP programme. It was intended that the NPC would work closely with the Chief Technical Advisor (CTA) with a view to assuming major responsibility for the programme, and thus ensuring continuity and sustainability of the programme's initiatives. However, it was decided that the NPC should receive further training in the rural development field. While this training is of value, the immediate implication is that there is no national counterpart to assume the role of CTA once GRISP withdraws. A national financial and administrative assistant and a national monitoring evaluation officer have been recruited by GRISP and provide an autonomous structure, which is created within the government similar to GRISP. These personnel will be of tremendous value if retained by the Government.

The calibre of GRISP fieldworkers is excellent. They have undergone intensive training with GRISP and acquired invaluable hands-on experience in participatory development. It was the intention of GRISP to ensure that it attained high standards since they are to be taken over by the Ministry of Local Government once the programme withdraws. Although they will not be attending regular quarterly GRISP workshops which served as a constant guidance to field staff, GRISP developed both a fieldworkers manual and VDC training manual, which may partially fulfill this role. The GRISP VDC training manual was well received by government departments and NGOs alike.

It is unfortunate that the GRISP programme is drawing to a close at time when the government of Lesotho is going through a transition. Along with 1993 change in government, a decision was taken after the elections to split the functions of the previous Ministries of Interior and to create a Ministry of Home Affairs, Local Government and Rural Development. The GRISP programme which was originally intended to be seconded to the Ministry of Interior, will now be overseen by the Ministry of Local Government. However, it has not yet been established at this stage (1997) since it consists only of a Permanent Secretary and a Deputy. In addition, neither the structure nor the budget of the new ministry have been defined and there is not certainty as to salary and ranking of the GRISP fieldworkers.

Many of the fieldworkers have left relatively junior positions with the government to join with GRISP, where they enjoyed high salaries and training benefits. It is anticipated that this will cause internal staff dissatisfaction with the government. If offered a lower salary, it is likely that these fieldworkers will look for alternative employment and eventually posts will be re-advertised.

It is definitely the stated intention of the government that GRISP fieldworkers are retained, although the extent to which their role will be redefined, and their general autonomy from the government, has yet to be established. There is no clarity on the above mentioned issues. As long as this state of affairs remains unclear, there is a possibility that the fieldworkers will find themselves alternative employment and the government would thus lose a valuable component of their grassroots planning initiatives.

The District Rural Development Officers (DRDOs) have been working closely with the UNV's but their role as counterparts has never been formalised. It is essential the role and the responsibilities of these DRDOs and the fieldworkers are formalised for their activities to be effective.

Despite these many structural problems, it is widely recognised in the government that GRISP, although slow to start, has been able to implement many grassroots development initiatives with remarkable cost-efficiency and effectiveness and proposals for new projects are flooding in as a result of the tremendous awakening in the rural communities. Government recognises that GRISP

was able to achieve these results through its relative autonomy and whatever structure is set up with government to take over GRISP's role, will need to have similar autonomy.

### *GRISP at the Local Level*

GRISP has worked very well at strengthening government at district level. Enthusiastic collaboration has developed at district level between line ministries and project staff both in training and implementation. GRISP served to build effective avenues of communication between the VDC members and the line ministry officers and drew the district councils into the development process.

A future area of concern at the district level is that of the re-election of the VDCs. Many fieldworkers, district coordinators and some government officials have expressed concern that the re-election will erode the sustainability of the training benefits of the programme. However, if some of the members are re-elected, as they will be, and if the community is satisfied with the participatory development initiatives which have been taking place, then continuity will be ensured. In addition, if the fieldworkers who are familiar with the VDC training process remain active in the field and are involved in future training, this potential may be mitigated and skills may also be transferred from one VDC to another. One objective which GRISP undeniably achieved has been that of empowerment at the community level. The VDCs are articulating their needs and have plans for the future. As long as there is support for this momentum which has been built up on the ground so successfully by GRISP, it appears that this momentum will continue.

### *GRISP's Objectives and the Rural Communities*

The following conclusions regarding GRISP's goals are drawn from observation and from discussion with the people at grass roots level.

#### **Promoting grass roots communities:**

Discussion with members of the village development committees (VDC) and individuals in the

rural communities revealed that community participation is not a new idea to Basotho people. They traditionally hold “Pitsos” among rural communities as a means of discussing issues. People are familiar with these methods and can express their opinions freely.

The fact that the GRISP national fieldworkers were living among the communities had tremendous benefits as far as the GRISP programme aim of participatory development was concerned. The fieldworkers can interact freely with the local communities. This style infers what Chambers (1993) calls “reversals in learning”, as a tool to encourage those trained or educated to learn from many below and not just from the few above.

Since they were living with the people, who did not regard them as outsiders who have intentions of imposing projects upon them, they were readily accepted. Only in rare instances did the communities and VDCs within the selected GRISP villages *not* decide on the implementation of a project. In these cases where the community did not respond to the opportunities offered by GRISP, it would withdraw from the village. Achieving participatory rural development would in this case be impossible.

As illustrated in the previous chapter, some communities had mobilised and initiated their own projects in the past before contacting the GRISP programme. Some had organised pre-schools or a revolving credit fund between themselves, built roads or initiated tree planting schemes.

These kinds of projects, by their nature, demand maximum participation and commitment from the community. However, many VDCs had been frustrated in their attempts to initiate an infra-structural project. They frequently explained that the community had identified their priority needs and approached the relevant line Ministries for assistance, but had to wait between five to ten years for a response.

The GRISP project reinforced, among many rural communities, the need for participation in their development initiatives. When asked what they had learned from GRISP they came up with many responses. These included the following comments:

“We have learnt to work with love and unity. GRISP has taught us love and faith, how to initiate projects, work without pay, and cooperate with one another”; and “We have learnt through building this clinic that all community members must participate if we are to progress”.

### **Capacity Building**

Identifying and prioritising needs and deciding on appropriate development activities within communities’ is a pressing problem. It does require much debate to identify them. However, since they can only be addressed with limited resources on a time frame schedule, they must be prioritised. An example of such situation is the community of Ha Rakhapu in Mafeteng district.

The community identified their needs as follows: roads, clinics and upgrading of water supply. The village is situated about 25 km from Mafeteng on an extremely bad road which becomes impassable in the summer months. This isolation meant that the clinic facilities in Mafeteng were inaccessible to this village and others areas. Since the road project was too large for GRISP, assisting with a clinic became the next obvious choice.

When talking to the people in the rural communities, it was repeated several times that GRISP had helped them to become aware of certain needs, e.g. the awareness of the need for improving latrines is brought about through education concerning water-borne diseases such as dysentery.

“We have learnt about our needs, we are also now aware of our problems such as sanitation, health and other needs in this regard.”

Comments surrounding development activities in the future were always encouraging. They ranged from small scale activities such as fencing of vegetable gardens to building schools. Invariably, the GRISP environment has to be involved in income generating activities such as poultry and eggs, piggeries, vegetable growing and women’s handicraft. Although these communities are definitely articulating income generating activities and enterprises, as one of their needs, making progress in this respect is an indication that GRISP has been achieving its goal of empowerment.

## **Mobilising Human, Financial and Material Resources**

From the brief description of various project activities in the previous chapter, it is clear that GRISP was successful in mobilising human, financial and material resources. The degree of participation in projects which involved hard manual labour was overwhelming, with people making large sacrifices of their time and energy.

Personal contributions ranged from materials to providing builders with food. If any decision was taken to contribute financially to the project, this was organised by the members according to the popular method. The village of Nkesi in Maseru district was required to raise M3,000,000 as a component of their grant from MMU. There were delays before the funds were collected, and when asked how it was finally arranged, the chairman of the water subcommittee observed that he had been requested by the community members to approach the Labour Construction Unit (LCU) and Ministry of Works' (MOW) road building programme, which the communities have been working with, to deduct payment from their salaries.

Some comments regarding the mobilisation of human and material resources are as follows:

“ We have learnt a great deal from GRISP. It is us who have provided labour and paid towards our water supply, with the understanding that we are all doing something for ourselves.”

These comments indicate not only an enthusiasm to participate, but also a sense of pride in participating and the resulting feelings of ownership.

## **Implement, Monitor and Account for the GRISP Micro-Projects**

All VDCs expressed their appreciation to GRISP for the training which they received on the basis of experiences at Rakhapu and Mafeteng district, who are in the process of building a clinic. This serves as a practical example of GRISP initiative. They confirmed that they had learnt the procedures in project implementation such as how to write project proposals, how to organise and work with subcommittees, how to manage a project, how to encourage community organisation



and ensure that this organisation is capable of managing accounts and project funds.

Many VDCs mentioned that before GRISP came into the scene they had no knowledge of whom they could approach for funds and assistance for projects. They had little knowledge of procedures, and explained that GRISP has trained them in this respect. VDC members all remarked favourably on the benefit associated with GRISP workshops.

**Ensure Sustainability by Building Capacity once the GRISP Technical Assistance has been withdrawn.**

While holding discussions regarding this view the VDC and the community members mentioned that they had certainly developed skills from the GRISP programme. They were asked to elaborate a step by step statement of how their projects have developed from articulated need to the finished product. This was to establish if the understanding of the project procedures was sufficiently entrenched so as to be replicable.

The question provoked discussions with responses naturally varying from community to community. Some communities clearly outlined the procedures and problems which they had experienced. Detailing the solutions and conclusions applicable, without failing the learning experience associated with the fact that they had been given an opportunity to manage their own fund, was highlighted.

It was clear that about 35% of those spoken to (in the VDC) had not fully grasped the procedures. Since they were unable to grasp the events clearly and systematically, they referred to the events as having been the initiation of the GRISP staff.

It can be reasonably concluded from this that the capacity by the local communities to implement and manage their own projects should be enhanced. The communities should also be permitted to raise their own funds and be given access to credit, and to allocate resources as they see fit. There is a concern that this situation may not be sufficiently entrenched so as to ensure that development initiatives taken in the future will be successful once GRISP withdraws support.

Most of the UNVs and local government staff confirmed that the GRISP programme was ending prematurely. They indicated that the programme had experienced a slow start due to minor hitches at the outset and that community empowerment by its nature is a slow process.

The programme has been successful in the sense that there is a feeling of empowerment among the people in the rural communities at the close of GRISP. But many UNVs and fieldworkers feel that the programme needed a longer time to ensure that this feeling of empowerment would remain entrenched with people in order to be sustainable in the future. The GRISP staff (such as at Mahole's Hoek district) are currently focussing on consolidating VDC training with an attempt to ensure that momentum of the programme is not lost.

VDC and community members are confident that they have the skills to participate in the initiation and implementation of micro-projects. Many of them are also confident that they will be able to pass this knowledge and skills on to others. However, many of the people expressed concern that if they were to initiate costly infra-structural projects in the future, they will be embarrassed due to the lack of capital and would therefore still be reliant on government or donors for financial assistance.

### *Lessons Drawn From GRISP*

Although GRISP has been successful in achieving its objectives there are certain areas of concern, which should be emphasized for the benefit of the future programme in Lesotho. These are discussed and recommendations drawn in the subsequent section in the context of participation, empowerment, sustainability, government involvement and possible future extension.

### **Participation**

The term grassroots participation is broad and vague. The community is not a club but made up of individuals with diverse needs. It is often not possible to capture the voices of the community well. This has been well demonstrated by observations from some of the GRISP micro-projects which do not manage to attract full community understanding of the need for their mobilisation.

GRISP micro-projects that did not manage to attract full community support or mobilisation can cause problems associated with successful implementation of projects.

The main thrust of the GRISP project was to focus on capacity building of the VDCs. The reasons for doing so are well defined and central in GRISP's initiative of supporting decentralisation and building capacity within local government. The term "grassroots participation" does not itself need to be treated with caution. However, there is need for caution when a project has to deal primarily with a body such as a VDC, which may not have been democratically elected or is not entirely representative of the community. Although the traditional chiefs have ex-officio status within their VDCs, their power may be slow to yield meaningful benefits and they can often sway VDC's and the community's decision to benefit their own agenda.

### Recommendation

Although this situation is largely beyond the scope of development initiatives, it is essential that the programme should be aware of power struggles and imbalances if it is to achieve full community participation. This is inevitable because the project staff must spend sufficient time with members of the community to understand fully the community dynamics and avoid any potential conflict areas.

### **Empowerment**

During discussions the VDC's were asked to elaborate on the skills that they had acquired during the process of implementing and managing the micro-projects. Some VDC's did so with clarity and insight, while others were less clear about the procedures and sequence of events. Some referred to the skills acquired as initiated by the GRISP staff, since the staff either lived in the project villages or visited the project site at least once a week. They were often readily available for basic supervision and when any potential problems requiring immediate attention arose.

While it was undeniably beneficial from a training perspective that GRISP's experience was really derived from its practical presence in the field, it is increasingly becoming uncertain how these communities would be able to manage their projects without continuous assistance. This raises the question whether to build a capacity to sustain development projects is envisioned to be of significant value for future undertakings.

### Recommendation

A most viable option to uncertainty surrounding empowerment is to strengthen and to continue organising training sessions with VDC's and other relevant development committees after comprehensive skills-oriented project completion, as some District coordinators are currently doing. It is important that the training is reinforced with a self-evaluating system as a feedback measure. There is no doubt that these sessions will serve as reinforcement to the procedures and thus contribute to the successful maintenance of projects in the future.

### **Sustainability**

A question is arising as to whether the training of a committee or council can be viewed as sustainable. Since the committees are by nature transitory bodies, it is the experience of government officials that the committees elected to maintain for example, a water scheme, sometimes fall apart and that small committees have a better cohesion and larger life span. A similar issue on the sustainability of the training of VDC's was raised by most people including the District coordinators and GRISP fieldworkers, since the VDC's serve a three-year term before being re-elected.

It was intended that skills and knowledge acquired by VDC members will remain in the village and will be transferable. The GTZ Mafeteng Development programme, however, acknowledges that there is no guarantee of permanency when working with groups, and found that most VDC's which are generally 'good' are those which are supported by a stable community structure which

facilitates work on community based micro-infrastructure projects.

### Recommendation

The recommendation of ensuring sound community participation and interaction with project staff must be appropriately timed with community members and the VDC. This is to facilitate full understanding of the VDC dynamics and to ensure that they are working with an effective body which will be of value in the end. As Hollnsteiner (1978:48) has observed, conscientising people and community workers makes them consciously aware about their life situation.

### *GRISP and Government Involvement*

A spokesperson from the village water supply explained that due to inadequate consultation during the inception of the GRISP programme, assumptions have been made regarding the availability of technical support from Ministries. The GRISP approach was to maintain an informal relationship with the technical staff of the line ministries in the field, drawing from their technical expertise on a random basis. This informal relationship had expediting benefits since it navigated the delays that would have resulted had they followed the formal village water supply procedures according to the planned schedule. The random requests made to the GRISP staff in the field interfered with its planning in this regard. As a result the village water supply management eventually requested that the field staff cease any further involvement with the GRISP programme.

Implementation problems sometimes resulted from this ad hoc arrangement with the staff, e.g. Maletsunyane village in Botha Buthe where water technicians withdrew midway through implementing a water supply scheme on the basis that they needed permission from headquarters to work on the project.

### Recommendation

There is an inherent weakness with the grassroots participatory approach, in that it does not

always ease good planning. This can be avoided through regular discussions between the project district coordinators, technical staff and the management of the government line ministries. This communication is essential to ensure a continuous cooperation between parties and mutually beneficial strategies.

#### *Possible Future Extension of GRISP*

Many communities spoken to have said that they had many necessary skills needed for carrying out their own development initiatives. Although they are now aware that financial, human and material resources can be mobilised from within the community and can make a significant contribution to the projects, many larger projects require funding beyond that which the communities may raise amongst themselves.

This implies that communities that have worked with GRISP are still donor dependant. It was the original intention of GRISP to help with initiating income generating projects that would have reduced this donor dependency. It is thus recommended that any future extension to GRISP focus on promoting income generating projects which would contribute to reducing donor dependency. It is also recommended that any future extension to GRISP focus on promoting income generating activities and teaching business administration, especially in the light of the business initiatives which some of the communities with whom GRISP has worked, have already taken up.

## CONCLUSION

GRISP aimed to empower rural communities through education, by training of elected community representatives and by learning through active involvement. The programme aimed to mobilise people through encouraging active participation in identifying needs, designing, developing and contributing towards small scale projects of a social infrastructural nature. Without doubt, GRISP appears to have achieved these goals among the rural communities.

The communities in the (GRISP) pilot villages have articulated their needs. They have taken initiatives in identifying the solutions and strategies towards meeting these needs. They have contributed money, labour and time towards their projects. The commitment to mobilise resources, showed a defined process of participatory development.

It is important to note that the GRISP primary institution building programme which aimed to help the Government of Lesotho in decentralising development planning and encouraging community participation in development initiatives at the grassroots level, was sound. This participatory strategy of laying the ground work for decentralised planning has been appealing because the programme focussed on training and building the capacity of the village development councils (VDCs) who are the elected representatives of the rural communities and the lowest level of a central government tier.

The VDCs in the GRISP pilot villages is an appropriate vehicle through which community mobilisation can take place. Both VDC and community have voiced their enthusiasm for GRISP's participatory approach to development and also by involving the district development councils (DDC) in it's training programme. GRISP has strengthened the links between the VDC and the government officers at the district level.

The government and NGOs in Lesotho have both regarded GRISP programmes with a lot of optimism and emphasised the programme's relative autonomy from the central government planning machinery. On the other hand, working with the government at every level has contributed to its success. However, the government generally recognised that they were not adequately prepared to take over the running of the project by September 1995. It certainly did

not have the necessary budget to finance micro project activities. This is likely to be problematic since development activities in the rural areas are still very much donor dependant. Proposals from the VDC's with whom GRISP has worked are awaiting funding approval. If they are declined because of the funds being not available, it is possible that the community will become despondent and lose momentum in their development initiatives.

The United Nations volunteers (UNVs) are the GRISP national fieldworkers, who collaborate with government officials at both district, and central level. Concerned NGOs in Lesotho are all of the opinion that the programme will be ending prematurely to have effectively achieved its goals, especially for sustainability. They have undeniably achieved community empowerment and a capacity to identify and prioritise needs and mobilise resources to bring improvements in the society.

Some communities have already initiated several micro projects and their mobilisation has had spin-off effects, as in income generating activities. Other communities have taken longer to grasp the idea and have not yet reaped the full benefits of the programme. All express disappointment at an end of the GRISP programme and their concern is that they will not assist them to meet their needs in the future projects. Many more people in the rural areas stood to benefit from GRISP's activities. Where the government is sufficiently well equipped to take over where GRISP leaves off, this would certainly not need to be the case.



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