Approaches to participation in rural development

Peter Oakley and David Marsden

Published on behalf of the ACC
Task Force on Rural Development

International Labour Office Geneva

ISBN 92-2-103594-8

First published 1984
Second impression 1985

Printed in Switzerland

PREFACE

This study was carried out at the request of the Panel on People's Participation. The Panel itself was established in 1981 by the Inter-Agency Task Force on Rural Development, chaired by Professor Nurul Islam, Assistant Director-General of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. The creation of the Panel on People's Participation reflected the growing awareness within the United Nations system of the importance of participation as a development objective and of the need for concrete initiatives to strengthen the participatory imperative in the rural development activities of the different United Nations agencies.

The work programme of the Panel, drawn up at its meeting in January 1982, comprises conceptual, analytical work; exchange of experience among developing countries in participatory initiatives at the grass-roots level; reorientation of existing programmes to incorporate or strengthen participatory approaches; initiation of joint field projects; and mobilisation of resources for programmes and projects seeking to promote authentic participation by the rural poor. The present study represents an important element of the work programme of the Panel. It was felt that while there was a growing acceptance of participation as a development objective, reflected in part in increasing references to people's participation in official documents and debates on development, there was also a great deal of misunderstanding and confusion about its meaning and objectives and approaches to its promotion. Consequently, there was a need for a simple, coherent and succinct statement aimed at clarification of the diverse interpretations of the term, distillation of the experience with participatory approaches by different agencies, and provision of guidance on the future development of analytical and operational work on participation by the agencies.

The study by Peter Oakley and David Marsden goes a long way in fulfilling this difficult and challenging task. The authors have wisely eschewed the easy path of producing a manual containing a mechanical listing of definitions of participation, of obstacles to its promotion and of projects and programmes ostensibly designed to strengthen participatory aspects. Instead, they have sought in a subtle and sensitive manner to trace the roots of alternative

interpretations of participation to fundamental differences in perceptions of the development process and to illustrate approaches to participation through sketches of concrete initiatives. They have also made a start with an analysis of the emerging elements of a strategy for participatory development.

The authors contrast two interpretations of participation: the one more widely accepted is to view participation as an input to development. The people are "mobilised" to implement activities generally decided by outsiders. This instrumental and interventionist interpretation is contrasted with the view which regards participation as "empowering" the rural poor to play an effective role in rural development. While recognising some attributes of the latter view of participation, the authors repeatedly stress the difficulty of catching its essence in a formal definition. An important feature of participation as "empowering the poor" is voluntary, spontaneous and often gradual growth of organised group activity, preceded by a process of collective reflection and characterised by active involvement of members and by self-reliance. The process is often but not always initiated by some outside activists. But it is quite impossible at this stage to generalise on the direction and mechanics of evolution of such groups.

Some indication of what is involved in this process is given in the five illustrative accounts of participatory processes presented in the study. These range from pressure-group activity, such as in Bhoomi Sena, to health improvement in Ecuador and include official attempts at participation promotion both at the local level, as in Nepal, and at the national level, as in Ethiopia. One illustration deals with the effort of fisherwomen in Brazil to organise and improve their living conditions. These case studies illustrate a wide diversity in initial objectives, the methods used to promote organisation and participation and the results achieved.

In the concluding chapter, the authors seek to draw together the common elements of a participatory approach to development. While recognising that there is no universal model of participation, they delineate some of the building blocks of a more complete analysis of the theory and practice of participatory approach to development. It is to be hoped that this study will stimulate further efforts to advance our understanding of this approach

through reflection on the myriad of participatory initiatives under way in various parts of the Third World.

Dharam Ghai
Chairman
Panel on People's Participation

TABLE OF CONTENTS

"What gives real meaning to popular participation is the collective effort by the people concerned to pool their efforts and whatever other resources they decide to pool together, to attain objectives they set for themselves. In this regard participation is viewed as an active process in which the participants take initiatives and action that is stimulated by their own thinking and deliberation and over which they can exert effective control. The idea of passive participation which only involves the people in actions that have been thought out or designed by others and are controlled by others is unacceptable."

(ACC Task Force, Working Group on Programme Harmonization, Rome, 1978)

* Our underlining *

INTRODUCTION

The Panel on People's Participation was set up by the ACC Task Force on Rural Development as part of the arrangements for its new programme of work adopted at the February 1981 meeting and approved by the ECOSOC. The ILO was designated as the Convenor of the Panel.

The Panel met for the first time from 19 to 21 January 1982, and, among its resolutions, it agreed that it would be useful to prepare a brief paper outlining the obstacles associated with people's participation in rural development and analysing approaches which had been used to bring about such participation. We were asked by ILO to write this paper and terms of reference were agreed at a meeting in Geneva on 28 and 29 July 1982.

It is no secret that a vast amount of literature and documentation exists about the concept and practice of participation. A considerable amount of this literature has been generated within the United Nations system. In fact it is rare these days to find a document on development strategy or approaches which does not refer to participation or suggest that the strategy or approach under discussion is participatory in nature. Panel members will be fully aware of how in the past few years the term "participation" has come to dominate the literature on development. For example, apart from the notion of actually participating in rural activities, we have been introduced to participatory evaluation, participatory action-research, participatory field-action and, more generally, participatory research. There are few who would disagree with the statement that the "participation" of the people is essential for any rural development programme to succeed. The problem is not in emphasising the importance of "participation". The problem, in the context of rural development, is to achieve a consensus on the meaning of the term, if such an exercise is either valid or possible. "Participation" is the latest in a tradition of concentration on particular concepts or terms which guide development assistance in a particular direction.

In the context of the above it might well be asked what further meaningful statements could be written on "participation". Certainly we have not lacked for material. Our task has involved an extensive literature review but has not included any field work for this paper. What we have attempted to do is to take a hard, pragmatic look at the concept of "participation" and examine a number of rural development programmes or projects in which "participation" is considered a vital

element. In view of the fact that the paper has been requested by the ACC Task Force on Rural Development and that much of what has been written specifically on "participation" has been commissioned by one or another United Nations agency, we have examined a considerable amount of United Nations documentation. We have, however, also looked outside the United Nations system and have tried to use other sources. The difficulty with this latter documentation is that it does not treat "participation" in the same "formal" manner as the United Nations, and thus it has been difficult to reconcile the distinct interpretations within the same paper.

The terms of reference of this study asked that we address ourselves to the issue of the participation of the rural poor in rural development. Such a broad category is, however, difficult to characterise universally. Other terms such as the "disadvantaged", "marginalised" or the "weaker sections" refer to the broad mass of the rural population who, although characterised in particular terms, share a common position of very limited access to or participation in development projects. We have, therefore, tried to adopt the issue of the participation of the rural poor as the basic perspective of our study. Although there is a growing concern for the needs and problems of the "rural poor" in development, little of the project literature on rural development adopts this perspective. In fact few rural development projects in the formal sector have any meaningful impact upon the lives of the rural poor. We examine participation, therefore, from the perspective of the "rural poor" and our conclusions are presented in these terms.

Similarly we were asked, in the context of our study, to consider the issue of the participation of rural women in development. Like no other section of the rural poor women often remain hidden and, in the elaboration of programmes for action, they are very often ignored. We felt that there was a very significant dilemma associated with the isolation of women in development projects and programmes; one that needed to be made at least explicit. This revolves around the emphases to be placed, in the analysis of problems and the formulation of policies, on gender differences. Those who argue that analyses and policies should not isolate women as a separate category, seem to suggest that if one does so one inhibits the development of a solidarity which could combine the whole of the rural poor in effective organisations to gain strength. In arguing in such terms the very real gender differences which

exist, and which marginalise women, remain unquestioned. Women in rural areas face a layer of structural and cultural constraints which restrict and bias their participation. The establishment of joint organisations in strategies for change often means that their interests are re-submerged. No account is taken of the female-specific nature of many of the problems that women face, or of the different networks in which they interact, which produce a very different, but seldom appreciated, configuration of interests. While recognising this we felt that much more attention needed to be paid to the issue of the participation of rural women through a separate study. In this volume we have attempted to evaluate critically various approaches to participation in rural development rather than address ourselves to what might be seen as the particular problems of so-called "target groups".

It was also the original intention that this study should consider both the issues of obstacles and approaches to participation in rural development. On completing the first draft of the study, however, we realised that we had in fact addressed ourselves more directly to the issue of "approaches". The two issues, whilst inter-related, do demand separate treatment and we felt that it was impossible to give them equal treatment in one study. We noted also that work had already begun in terms of identifying "obstacles" to participation and we did not wish merely to duplicate such work. From the point of view of our own experiences, we felt that we could make a more positive contribution by concentrating our study on "approaches" to participation which is an area which has been less prominently examined. We do consider the issue of "obstacles" in our text but not to any great depth. Our primary concern has been to highlight the ways in which rural development projects are trying to bring about the participation of the rural poor.

Finally, it is quite possible to approach the concept of participation in rural development from a wide range of perspectives, (i.e. organisation and participation, obstacles to participation, etc.). Indeed our biggest headache has been how to give this study a coherent perspective, considering the all-embracing nature of the term "participation". This study, therefore, should be seen as a contribution to an ongoing inquiry and not a definitive statement. Given the concern of the United Nations agencies for the operationalisation of the concept and given the nature of the Panel, it was agreed therefore that our perspective would be participation in

rural development programmes or projects. The majority of the agencies represented on the Panel which commissioned this paper employ the programme or project as their means of intervention in rural development. It was necessary to define quite narrowly the perspective to be adopted, otherwise the study could have dealt with anything and everything concerning participation.

We hope that a concentration on this particular form of intervention does not preclude an evaluation of the many "external" pressures that impinge on programme/project design and implementation. On the contrary we hope that our particular focus will serve as an enabling device which enhances our ability to come to terms with what is a very complex issue. It is not possible, of course, to isolate this level of intervention and overlook its relationship with the wider socio-political structure. Although, therefore, our conceptualisation and discussion of participation is broad-based, our detailed analysis of its practice is in the context of project and programme intervention on rural development.

In the writing of this paper we managed briefly to discuss its contents with a number of Panel members from ILO, FAO, WHO, IFAD and UNRISD. We are grateful to these colleagues for their assistance and for the documentation which they inevitably supplied. The task has been undertaken with some haste and, inevitably in such circumstances, more time and a different time of the year would have given us more satisfaction. Equally inevitably, somebody will surely comment that the preparation of this paper should have been a "participatory" exercise. But that may be the reality of all participatory exercises!

Peter Oakley
March, 1983.

David Marsden

Chapter 1

THE CONTEXT OF PARTICIPATION

1.1 Development strategy

The present search for a new international economic and social order reflects the build-up of a profound disillusionment with established development strategies. These latter emphasised economic growth and industrialisation in the context of increasingly centralised planning and control over the distribution of resources. The orthodox ideas, encapsulated in what has come to be termed a "modernisation" approach, stressed the injection of capital inputs from outside which would result in "take off" and the eventual spread of benefits throughout the system. Newly emergent independent nations would be given a helping hand up the evolutionary ladder that had already been climbed by those nations who had gone through the stage of industrialisation. Emphases were laid on providing the infrastructural facilities and institutions to facilitate this climb and on tackling the obstacles that were to be found on the way.

In this context the rural poor within these developing countries were not seen as the major resources for furthering the process of development, but rather as obstacles, and attention was turned to mobilising them through mass education and community development programmes to reach the critical "take off" point into self-sustained growth. The rural areas were perceived to be lagging behind the national development effort; agriculture had to be improved to support the industrialisation process. Projects and programmes designed to smooth the path were formulated by urban administrators and planners and little attention was paid to the rural populations who were regarded as traditional, even primitive, and who, in a paternalistic way, needed to be educated out of their ignorance.

Such strategies tended to ignore the growing cleavages in society which the "benefits" of modernisation seemed to be producing. There were massive dislocations of populations as a result of urban migration and increasing evidence of growing inequalities as certain sections of society seemed to be able to capture the benefits whilst others, a growing majority, were excluded from them. These strategies were based on a rather one-sided view of society in which

it was assumed that people could and should live in harmonious communities working for the benefit of the nation.

Public emphasis was placed on nation-building and on community development. It was seldom acknowledged that such processes might be being built upon social orders which were far from democratic and that support was being given to maintain and entrench sometimes very inegalitarian social systems, however inadvertently. In the 1970s the naïve and unreflexive certainties, which characterised the enthusiasm of the 1950s, were beginning to be renegotiated as the complexities of the development process were recognised and as the faith in the Western industrialised nations' strategies was called into question.

It became increasingly obvious that the officially endorsed economic development policies and programmes were themselves part of the problem. Early attempts to address this issue took the form of an identification of the "social" dimensions of development. It was felt that earlier failures were the result of a neglect of the "human factor" and efforts were made to incorporate those who had been marginalised by the development process into the national drive and also to get rid of the obstacles to that process which lay in the traditional attitudes of certain sectors of the population; largely those who lived in outlying rural and tribal areas.

The techniques to be employed in the incorporation of the "human factor" were seen to be akin to those employed by the economist. But as the gap between proclaimed goals and reality seemed to widen and the difficulties of actually measuring "social" development became more obvious, the space for conceptual confusion increased and the contradictions associated with these orthodox strategies became more apparent.

While it might well be argued that development, measured in primarily economic terms, has occurred and that participation has increased, as more and more sectors of the population have been incorporated into larger and more complex societies (the monetisation of economies has proceeded apace and markets for cash goods are available virtually everywhere), it might be argued that this incorporation was itself part of the problem. The new structures that were emerging provided fewer opportunities for people's involvement, as the resources available seemed to accumulate in the hands of fewer and fewer people. There was indeed a massive increase in

food production, for example, but the control of land by a smaller group of people meant that the benefits of such increases did not necessarily go to the actual producers.

1.2 Re-think

It is in this confused conceptual climate that a re-think of development strategies is occurring. It is very difficult to isolate the many inter-related elements that underpin this search for an alternative approach to forms of action/intervention or to chart a course through the mass of competing explanations, and show how they are fundamentally different from those adopted in the past and also how they have resulted in a re-alignment of interests focused on a particular section of the national population - the rural poor.

The search for more appropriate styles of development is fundamentally linked to what has been termed "dependency theory". This reflects a shifting paradigm in which explanations of poverty are seen in a new light, and represents a shift in the ways in which questions are posed and solutions elaborated. It is associated with the writings of people like Frank and Freire and has its greatest elaboration in Latin American practice. But that is not the only element in the changing equation. The "limits to growth" debate highlighted the destructive nature of sophisticated technological progress and the effects of industrialisation on the environment and called for more ecologically sound development strategies. The ideas associated with one particular global development path were being replaced by calls for more appropriate strategies which took into account the individuality of nations and regions. The examples of China and of Tanzania stand out as models in this search for appropriateness which became linked to strategies for endogenous and self-reliant development.

The negative side-effects of industrialisation, the increasing demands for employment and the satisfaction of basic needs, which were not being met by capital-intensive growth strategies, served to focus attention on the rural areas. The policies adopted unilaterally by those who had access to the instruments of power served to focus attention on the problems of the disadvantaged and the excluded who were to be found in a majority in the rural areas.

This search for a new order which emphasises the poor and the rural areas is not new. It has its roots in reactions to early

forms of industrialisation in the West. What is new is the centrality that it has been afforded in international thinking in recent years. It focuses around the concepts of dependency and of exploitation, both normative concepts which are very difficult to define except in relation to particular historical circumstances. It has its roots in a history of colonial expansion and a reinterpretation of that expansion. Rather than being seen as a civilising process the colonial experience is reinterpreted as a history of "subordination" and "exploitation" and as such has resulted in a profound distrust for "outsiders" and in calls for autonomous development strategies.

This historical experience has led to a thorough questioning of the relationships between the dominant and the subordinate powers. How far, for example, is the continuing poverty of these newly independent countries linked to the former colonising powers? How far is the industrialisation process dependent on maintaining that poverty? In other words, is active underdevelopment to be linked directly to continuing relations of subordination? While answers to such questions must remain hypothetical, in that they cannot be proved conclusively, they nevertheless provided an important new focus whereby explanations of continued poverty might be addressed with new conceptual tools.

"Dependency theory", if that is what one can call it, is characterised by a marked pessimism about the possibilities for development, particularly capitalist forms of development. For it is argued that such forms of development inevitably increase dichotomies and engender the enrichment of a few at the expense of the many: the obstacles to development are perceived to lie, not in the "traditional" and "backward" nature of society, but in the subordinate and marginalised role that countries have in the world economy. It is further argued that the ruling élites within these countries have co-operated with international capital to obstruct an independent development, and that they have encouraged an "unbalanced" development in which attention is focused on capital-intensive luxury consumer goods industries and unequal terms of trade ensure that surpluses are transferred out of the country, thereby stunting the development process.

Such an interpretation of the process of change does not exclude an industrialisation strategy, but rather suggests an

approach which attempts to avoid the dependent associations with the international economy and, perhaps justifiably, an approach which focuses on agriculture and the rural areas as spaces where dependency might be most easily avoided. Furthermore attention has focused on the subordination of nations to other nations, as if they were themselves actors on the world stage. This has, by analogy, led to an appreciation of what has sometimes been called "internal colonisation", manifest in the subordination of particular regions to the capital city, of rural to urban areas, of poor people to rich patrons, of share-croppers to landowners and of women to men. The focus of subordination may vary greatly; the processes involved are the same.

This interpretation cuts across the wholistic arguments for a unified development based on the development of so-called "communities" which operate in the "national" interest and which assume that everyone is, or should be, pulling in the same direction. Rather, it enables people to identify particular groups with conflicting interests and points towards an alternative analysis of society in which different interest groups struggle for control of available assets and resources. It looks at the processes of impoverishment and enrichment which characterise existing relationships of inequality and sees both processes as obstacles to the development process. "Dependency theory" offers different conceptual tools for analysis, locating the international agencies and national governments within the context of the problem, alerting them to the complexities of the issues involved, as well as to their roles as active agents in the processes of development and underdevelopment. They are seen as part of the problem rather than as neutral arbiters in some idealistic and ahistorical universe.

It was in the 1970s that attempts to deal with this dilemma began to surface in the establishment debate and different types of alternative strategies were explored. These reacted to those who wished to link development with "liberation", seen as a way of enhancing the control of the disadvantaged over resources, and who maintained that effective development necessarily implied radical structural change. A major vehicle for the elaboration of alternatives has been the periodical Development Dialogue, published by the Dag Hammarskjöld Foundation, which has coined the term "another development". The development philosophy adopted is one which stresses the qualitative and perhaps unmeasurable dimensions of

development; values which give a sense of fulfilment. Self-reliance is highlighted in the context of a participatory democracy in which the "consciousness-gap" between the leaders of society and the masses is closed and in which man is seen as the subject of his own world rather than the object of other people's worlds. Emphasis is placed on an empowering process which through organisation gives people the strength to create a space for themselves, and to build up material assets to support their own self-reliant development.

1.3 The rural poor

Such a philosophy holds the issue of participation as central and is primarily associated with the rural poor, not only because they are the most disadvantaged within society, but also because the rural areas in comparison with the urban areas, which constitute the industrial base, have been relatively neglected by previous development strategies. This philosophy of a "people-based" development "from below" assumes that participation is not only an end in itself but also a fundamental pre-condition for and a tool of any successful development strategy. The failure of past development strategies is fundamentally linked to the absence of this missing ingredient - participation.

But who are the rural poor? The category is extremely broad and does not necessarily allow us to differentiate between those who are being impoverished or enriched within such a category (if such a differentiation is indeed possible in terms of distinct human agents). The composition of the rural poor has been variously analysed.[1] A variety of other terms such as "underprivileged", "disadvantaged" and "low income groups", have also been used to describe the large majority of people in rural areas. Development projects have by and large failed to reach this section of the rural population. Benefits have often been "captured" by the rural élites. This seems to be particularly the case when one looks at the "male bias" in such projects which have largely presumed that, because women are parts of male-dominated households, their interests are reflected in the interests of their husbands or fathers.

Whilst no statement on the rural poor can have universal application and, indeed any normative statement might be regarded as aggregating competing interests in any specific context, the following encapsulates the major elements of our target group:

> ...that section of the rural population whose basic minimum needs for life, and existence with human dignity, are unfulfilled. Such a condition of poverty is characterised by low incomes, widely associated with various forms of oppression under social structures through which dominant social groups are able to dictate the conditions of life of the dominated and to appropriate much of the product of the latter's labour and often also the material assets the latter may initially possess.[2]

We are dealing therefore with the great mass of the people in rural areas: small farmers, tenants, share-croppers, the landless and also women. Women are often veiled behind these disadvantaged groups and thus forgotten in any formal categorisation, and in being disguised frequently suffer the harsher extremes of poverty. The rural poor are often geographically, socially and culturally isolated. They commonly lack the productive assets other than their labour power, which would enable them to struggle for independence. They remain attached in dependent ways to those who have control over land and capital.

A review of the literature would indicate the following as the kinds of problems which affect the rural poor's chances of improving the bases of their livelihood:

- lack of access to resources for development;
- lack of viable organisations to represent their interests;
- the dominant power of local moneylenders and traders;
- the dependent and marginalised nature of their lives;
- the air of despondency and despair which characterise their lives.

The literature is graphic on their plight and their poverty and despite "poverty-focused" programmes, a major obstacle has been in actually reaching the poorest of the poor. Some impact in terms of relief of a temporary nature seems to have been felt but, without major structural changes, the problem remains largely unaddressed. A radical reassessment of project design and implementation is called for to address these issues and these in turn require a radical change in the patterns and processes of intervention in the rural areas.

As indicated earlier, there is a major problem in focusing on the "rural poor" as a "target group". It is felt that this focus poses the danger of actually excluding from analysis those groups in society who might be responsible for the process of impoverishment. We need to be able to see both sides of the coin. To whom

are we actually referring when we talk of the rural poor? Traditional rural development projects have identified specific sectors of the rural population and directed their attention to them. Co-operative development projects, for example, bring together male participants with minimum access to land. Small farmers' development programmes focus on just that group. By implication the others who live with the co-operators or small farmers are excluded. The thinking behind the isolation of particular sectors would appear to be largely an elaboration of an ideology which emphasises the identification and stimulation of individual entrepreneurs. It was perhaps assumed that such persons represented the interests of the village or the "community" and that to focus on them would result in the "trickle-down" of benefits. While this was the case in some instances, it also had the effect of excluding others and perpetuating and enhancing divisions within the village.

Alternative development strategies break quite decisively with this perception of the community as some sort of concensual unity, and attempt to identify and work with distinct socio-economic groups with common interests that perhaps run counter to the interests of the established, visible élites in the community. These strategies are specifically aimed at the non-visible and those without voices. Under such circumstances the chances of hitting an invisible target are slender. There may be no cohesion in the "group" identified and thus one of the major aims is actually to remove the veil which hides them and be involved in the pre-history of other organisation. The literature on the composition of such groups, while increasing, remains scanty because of the problems of visibility. Their size, structure and purposes vary greatly according to the particular environment in which they are found and the pre-history of their establishment. They operate in a complex environment in which relationships are rapidly changing and in which their organisation is both cause and effect of that change in the negotiation of a new order and in their participation in the benefits of that changing order. The obstacles to their emergence, perpetration and growth are located in the old order which is giving birth to them and their demands for participation take on new dimensions as they grow. Their growth is stimulated and to some extent legitimated with help from outsiders who can create the space for their growth.

When we talk of the "rural poor", therefore, it is impossible to conceptualise them as a static, homogeneous group which can be

readily identified and moulded. They are a dynamic and fragmented population and one of the aims of isolating them is to increase their awareness of a whole series of common interests which might give them the strength and the opportunity to organise. It is increasingly important to understand the existence of discrete common interest groups and the complex web of relationships between them. Their increased participation is essential for the elaboration of the new order because on their participation rests the future of all development initiatives.

1.4 Participation as a strategy for rural development

Most people would agree that increased participation is a "good" thing. It is put centre-stage now because it is seen as strategically important. But the tactics that one adopts to implement this strategy will vary according to the point of view that one adopts about the role/nature of rural intervention. One can, at the risk of grotesquely oversimplifying, identify two types of strategy. First, there is that which is based on the assumption that there is little wrong with the direction of the development effort and that past failures are largely because the "human factor" has been neglected and people have not wanted to get involved in projects about which they had little information or they were dubious. Such assumptions lead to the elaboration of extension strategies which are meant to "fill the gap", inject more information, increase the knowledge base. If the people are involved, they will commit themselves to the support of projects.

Secondly, as a result of the re-think in development strategies, there is that strategy which assumes that the direction of the development effort is fundamentally misconceived. Here, participation is seen as a strategy for the creation of opportunities to explore new, often open-ended directions with those who were traditionally the objects of development. The tactics involved in such a strategy are fundamentally different. More knowledge may not be required; it is rather the knowledge of the rural poor that has not been incorporated. It is <u>not</u> the failure to take into account the "human factor" which is at fault, but rather the unreflexive way in which the developers were left out of the equation and the rather unilateral way in which they dealt with what were regarded as passive recipients - consumers rather than producers. Participation in

this sense is concerned therefore with the production of knowledge, new directions, new modes of organisation rather than with the dissemination of more of the same.

Whatever assumptions one operates with, ideas about participation converge in a concern for giving the rural poor a voice in development decisions, access to productive assets and a share in development. Participation is a multi-dimensional process which varies from location to location in response to particular circumstances. There is no one way of looking at it and its interpretation is very much a function of the analysis employed.

Given the convergence of emphases on this process, there have been a whole host of attempts to engender, operationalise and extend the participation of the poor in rural development. Participation is a major concern for United Nations agencies such as the ILO, WHO, FAO, IFAD and UNESCO. Some have set up particular bodies to explore its dimensions and UNRISD has devoted a major branch of its research work to a popular participation programme. In 1976 the ILO-sponsored World Employment Conference (WEC) identified the issue of "basic needs" and the crucial role of participation in such a strategy. Its PORP (Participatory organisations of the Rural Poor) programme was launched in 1977 and has already produced a number of informative studies. Also the ILO's assistance to rural workers' organisations and support for workers' educational activities to bring about effective participation have been important programmes for many years. In 1978 the WHO-sponsored Alma-Ata Conference similarly stressed the importance of "participation" in extending primary health care and providing health for all by the year 2000. In 1979 the WCARRD's declaration of principles and programme of action stress the fundamental importance of participation in rural development. This has led to the FAO-sponsored People's Participation Programme (PPP) which seeks to promote rural development on the principle of effective participation. Participation is an important and growing element in IFAD's rural credit projects. Similarly, following the 1978 conference on Participation in Rural Development organised by UNESCO in Lima, Peru, research carried out in the Caribbean and in Africa on small farmers and food crops, has closely meshed with action encouraging small farmers to participate in rural development policies and decisions through organisation. Outside the United Nations system the promotion of participation has become a major plank of the activities of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) in their shift from relief and improvement efforts to the

support of efforts to tackle what are perceived to be more fundamental problems of lack of access, assets and voice. This NGO concern is illustrated, for example, by the World Council of Churches' Commission on the Church's Participation in Development.

In the past decade, and particularly since the WEC in 1976, a large amount of resources has gone into the promotion of participation. The results of this investment, however, are still unclear. Before we examine the varied practice to date, it would be useful to analyse the concept of participation and see what it means to those who employ it in the context of rural development.

Notes:

[1] P. Devitt: "Notes on poverty-orientated rural development", in Extension, planning and the poor (London, ODI, 1977); S.D. Briggs: The rural poor: Obstacles which prevent the development of agricultural technologies for their benefit (New Delhi, CIMMYT, 1979); ILO: Poverty and landlessness in rural Asia (Geneva, 1977); G. Hunter: Agricultural development and the rural poor (London, ODI, 1978); FAO: Research guidelines for field action projects (Rome, ROAP, 1979).

[2] Md. A. Rahman: "Concept of an inquiry", in Development: Seeds of change (Rome, SID), 1981, No. 1, p. 3.

Chapter 2

THE CONCEPT OF PARTICIPATION

2.1 Introduction

As we have seen in Chapter 1, it is impossible to disentangle the concept of participation from some understanding of rural development. Indeed in the past decade it has come to be heralded by some as a key element in rural development; if only it could be meaningfully inserted into the "development process", success would be ensured. Much of the literature on participation sees participation as the "missing ingredient" in this development process; a tangible input which can be physically inserted into rural development projects.[1] Yet few references to the concept present any analysis of its fundamental nature or consider the substantial implications of implementation.

Popular participation has been conceptualised in relation to some form of political democracy and, equally broadly, in terms of involvement in the processes of societal change and growth that the term "development" suggests.[2] More commonly in development literature it is examined from the point of view of government intervention in development, and in this respect, terms such as "mobilisation" and "coercion" have been used to characterise the nature of the "participation". The "intervention" is itself conceptualised into some kind of planning process with the accompanying paraphernalia of mechanisms, objectives, budgets and control. It is true to say that the more commonly conceptualised understanding of "participation" in rural development is presented in the context of that apparatus. Participation is in fact perceived as a kind of injection which can be applied to a rural development project and consequently help influence its outcome.

Conversely, where "participation" emerges as a result of some kind of bottom-up process, it is characterised as being "authentic" and focusing on distribution. Whilst some would disagree it is hard not to associate this latter form of "participation" more directly with the non-government sector. In this understanding of "participation" the emphasis is upon education and the building up of the organisational basis with which certain groups within the rural sector might achieve their participation. Implicit also is some form of consciousness-raising and preparation for the task of participating.

Participation is, however, generally understood as a process and not as some kind of static end product of development. And yet when the dimension of time is introduced the positions diverge; one school would argue that "participation" can be manipulated within the context of the time of a particular intervention; whilst others argue the unpredictable nature of authentic "participation". The concept of time in terms of a process of participation is, of course, related to the task to be undertaken, which itself is a function of the development perspective employed. This process has also been conceptualised in terms of discrete stages (marginal/substantial/structural participation) although a major difficulty arises concerning the understanding of the content of each stage.[3] Similarly where typologies of "participation" are discussed, such terms as "spontaneous", "induced" or "coerced" are used.[4]

In the context of rural development we are not concerned in the first instance with how to achieve a totally participatory society. We are more concerned with how to bring about some meaningful involvement in the development of the rural sector on the part of those who depend on that sector for a livelihood. It is common knowledge that the benefits of this development have been unevenly distributed over the past two decades; "participation" is suggested as the means by which this trend might be reversed. "Participation" is seen as the means for a widening and redistribution of opportunities to take part in societal decision-making, in contributing to development and in benefiting from its fruits.

2.2 Interpretation

Although there is unanimity on the importance of "participation" to achieve the desired redistribution of the benefits of development, there is less unanimity on the nature and content of the "participation" process. One of the most obvious features of the literature explaining "participation", is the wide range of statements presented. Some statements go little beyond public rhetoric; that is, they explain "participation" in supposedly neutral ways and such unrealistic terms as to make it meaningless.[5] In others a wide range of ambiguous terms such as "self-help", "self-reliance", "community involvement", "co-operation", "decentralisation" and "local-level autonomy" add to the air of generalisation.

We would agree with several authors who have argued that it is impossible to establish a universal definition of "participation".

As the UNRISD study points out, even with a working definition it is impossible to identify "participation" as an "actual social reality".[6] Rahman even argues that, given its complex "nature", "participation" can be explored but not contained in a formal definition.[7] However, working statements or interpretations are necessary if the process is to be understood at all and, in this respect, most documents or project reports present us with some kind of working statement. It is instructive to review the major ones here. We present them as though on a continuum (the limits of which reflect the divergent perspectives outlined in Chapter 1) in order to emphasise the conflicting range of interpretations which themselves reflect the dominant paradigms of development thinking:

(a) Participation is considered a voluntary contribution by the people to one or another of the public programmes supposed to contribute to national development but the people are not expected to take part in shaping the programme or criticising its content.[8]

(b) Participation means ... in its broadest sense, to sensitise people and, thus, to increase the receptivity and ability of rural people to respond to development programmes, as well as to encourage local initiatives.[9]

(c) With regard to rural development ... participation includes people's involvement in decision-making processes, in implementing programmes ... their sharing in the benefits of development programmes, and their involvement in efforts to evaluate such programmes.[10]

(d) Popular participation in development should be broadly understood as the active involvement of people in the decision-making process in so far as it affects them.[11]

(e) Community involvement means that people, who have both the right and the duty to participate in solving their own health problems, have greater responsibilities in assessing the health needs, mobilising local resources and suggesting new solutions, as well as creating and maintaining local organisations.[12]

(f) Participation is considered to be an active process, meaning that the person or group in question takes initiatives and asserts his/her or its autonomy to do so.[13]

(g) ... the organised efforts to increase control over resources and regulative institutions in given social situations, on the part of groups and movements of those hitherto excluded from such control.[14]

The interpretations above move from the general to the more specific. Based on our review of project literature, we suggest that statements (a), (b) and (c) reflect the dominant paradigm and indeed the more commonly expressed understanding of participation.

Statements (d) and (e) can be seen in contrast to the previous statements but are dominated by terms that themselves demand explanation, i.e. decision-making/greater responsibilities. Statements (f) and (g) reflect the emerging rural development re-think of the mid-1970s and inextricably equate participation with the achieving of some kind of power. The first statements have a brisk, no-nonsense and businesslike tone about them, reflecting the project or programme nature of participation with the built-in specific objectives and procedures. The latter statements illustrate more meaningfully the process nature of participation, emphasise the fact of group participation and highlight more dramatically the essentially active nature of participation. All the statements are predicated upon the particular perspective of rural development being employed.

2.3 Implementation

A review of the literature reveals a wide range of key terms or expressions which essentially characterise the nature of the participation in reference. Indeed in our discussions with agency representatives we attempted to sum up agency's interpretations of participation in these key terms. Such an exercise helps to encapsulate what is often a very diffuse explanation and practice and also highlights the conflicting fundamental objectives of the participation process. The terms themselves are not all self-explanatory and they do not fit into any obvious typology. Given, however, the emphasis of this paper with rural development and its implementation, we have decided to present the terms in four broad categories.

2.3.1 Collaboration - input - sponsorship

The understanding of participation in these three terms is inherent in statements (a), (b) and (c) above. Whilst these terms demand more specific definition, they all reflect a form of participation in which government is the chief protagonist. Indeed it could be argued that in this form "participation" equals "informing" and that the basic decisions concerning development have already been taken. This school of thought is unable to disassociate "participation" from government responsibility and control.

In its broadest sense this form of "participation" can be equated with mobilisation. Mobilisation is an important dynamic

in development practice and reflects both an underlying ideology which argues the need to mobilise the rural sector in order to transform it and make it more "modern" and "responsive" and also the practice of mobilising rural labour for capital formation and in order to relieve scarce government resources. Essentially, therefore, in this form of "participation" the basic decisions which underlie the development action have already been taken and government bureaucracy, in the process of implementation, invites the rural population to endorse and to collaborate with the decisions taken.

In this situation it becomes increasingly difficult to understand the application of, for example, statement (c). A whole genre of "participation" literature deals with the rural populations' supposed participation in decision-making, implementation, benefits and the evaluation of the development action. A similar genre offers a body of prescriptions which argues the need for governments to, i.e.:

- bring about effective decentralisation in order to facilitate local decision-making,
- introduce effective co-ordination at the local level in order to promote local participation,
- and establish local level planning mechanisms in which the people can effectively participate.[15]

Given the radical structural and bureaucratic modifications which would be required to bring about such changes, it can be seen that the presentation of participation in these terms is quite unrealistic. There are few examples of rural people effectively participating in "the planning process".[16] Similarly, if we consider the following normative statement on the decision-making process in the context of rural development, viz.:

> Decision-making ... is taken as a broad process encompassing all the aspects of learning and research, analysis and debate which preface and influence the formal choice of policy or action.[17]

we can understand the radical changes to existing bureaucratic structures and planning procedures that would be required in order for such a statement to be implemented.

The overwhelming impression of this form of "participation" is that where it exists, it is on predetermined terms and reflected formally in participation in the process of production or in established legal institutions. Much of the literature in this respect

refers to ideal states and inexplicably underestimates the profound consequences of participation in "decision-making" and "planning". In this form of participation the groundrules are previously established, participation is conceived as a manageable input, but the overwhelming majority of rural people remain excluded from any informed or systematic involvement in the events that affect their livelihood. It is essentially a passive form of participation.

2.3.2 Community development

In some situations it is possible to get a more meaningful understanding of participation in rural development. This is the case when we examine certain specific types of rural development programmes i.e. health, water or physical infrastructure. In these instances the literature does not exaggerate the nature of the participation concerned, but demonstrates quite explicitly its limits. The participation is limited to the task at hand and it would appear that in these tasks the rural people do have some kind of say. The participation involved is not institutionalised (unless some organisation form results) and, although the basic decisions regarding the task (i.e. national health priorities) have probably been taken, there is some meaningful discussion on interpretation and implementation. Much of the practice and experience of participation in this form can be found in case studies of community development.

The field of health is one in which the active involvement of the rural population seems most to have been achieved. In this respect the following statement is illustrative:

> Community participation has been described as the process by which individuals, families or communities assume responsibility for their own health and welfare and develop the capacity to contribute to their own and the community's development.[18]

This participation is actively promoted and involves some delegation of responsibility at the community level and the creation of local councils as vehicles of this participation.[19] The provision and management of water supply are also examples where local people can meaningfully participate. Indeed such participation is critical to the continuation of the water supply since external assistance invariably cannot be maintained.[20] Finally there is the substantial area of food aid, and the use of surplus food to generate capital improvements. There is, in fact, much debate on this controversial issue. Some would argue that the food acts as a catalyst or

stimulus to community participation and that the people do have some meaningful say in the tasks undertaken. Furthermore the experience gained is useful for future community participation. Others, however, among other points, point to the dependency that food aid can create and doubt the evidence of meaningful participation where food is offered as an incentive to participate in food for work programmes.

Undoubtedly in this type of community development, the voice of the people is to some extent heard. Unlike the more centrally dominated agricultural policy, it would appear that in local efforts to improve health and water, for example, local opinions and needs are taken into account. But the participation is confined to the task at hand and there is little evidence that the experience is used in order that the rural poor can tackle their more fundamental problems.

2.3.3 Organisation

There is a strong body of thought in the literature which argues that, if only the rural poor can be brought into some form of organisational structure, their participation would be ensured. Indeed this is the general tenor of the WCARRD whose declarations are based on the assumption that "... active participation of the poor can only be brought about by adequate people's organisations at the local level". Indeed some have gone so far as to define participation in terms of a process by which the rural poor can organise themselves and, through their own organisation, are able to have some say in local development efforts.[21] Inevitably linked with the suggestion of rural organisation is the assumption that, once such organisations are established, the "people" will automatically have a voice and can influence decision-making. The organisation of the rural population is not a new phenomenon in rural development. Indeed formal organisational structures, i.e. co-operatives and rural unions, were among the first structural imports into the rural areas of the Third World. Undoubtedly formal organisations such as co-operatives did facilitate the participation of some in rural development and similarly brought tangible economic benefits. There is equally no doubt that such formal organisations have been inadequate in facilitating the participation of the rural poor. The recent FAO ROAP study has confirmed this and also illustrated how such organisations can lead to the further impoverishment of the rural poor.[22] This failure is not a

reflection on, for example, the co-operative institution per se but more on the bureaucratic constraints which limit the successful functioning of such institutions.

The search has begun, therefore, for authentic people's organisations which, if they can be conceived, will supposedly result in more meaningful participation and give those previously excluded access to development. This search appears to be directed in two different, but not mutually exclusive, ways:

(a) those who seek to learn from the lessons of the past and propose reformed kinds of formal organisations within the existing socio-political framework;[23]

(b) those who have no prescribed model, but who stress that such organisations must emerge as a result of the people's own deliberations.[24]

The first approach would appear to be predominant. This approach often calls upon governments to make meaningful reforms (i.e. "delegation of power and self-management to the rural people" and "democratic processes in all decision-making"),[25] in order to promote the emergence of people's organisations. It is within this climate in fact that the United Nations agencies have to cope with their re-examination of participation. Realistically it is difficult to imagine that a totally new climate will materialise which will right the wrongs of the past. Undoubtedly in this approach some rural people have participated effectively and gained tangible benefits. The approach, however, has not led to the meaningful participation of the rural poor in general.

The second approach is still very much in its infancy and there are as yet few substantial examples. This approach similarly draws upon the experience of the past but seeks a more radical prescription. There are some studies within the existing development bureaucracy which seek to determine a more authentic organisation for the rural people, and some of this research is also being done, in an unsystematic manner, by the non-governmental agencies.[26] This approach fundamentally seeks to avoid the introduction from outside of an organisational form but instead is researching the conditions under which an authentic form of organisation might meaningfully emerge from within the rural poor.[27] In other words, the creation of the organisation is part of the participation process. Organisation means strength and strength is a prerequisite to taking action. This process is closely linked to the Freirian type praxis and it is a process in which a crucial element concerns the nature and the role of the external intervention.

The relationship between organisation and participation is incontestable; it is the nature of the participation which is in debate. Where organisational forms are introduced from outside, the constraints upon meaningful participation are self-evident. Where an organisational form is to emerge as a result of a process of participation, however laudatory, it is equally self-evident the enormous pressures such a process will have to confront. It is improbable in the short term that such efforts will enjoy the protective cover of International Labour Convention No. 141 (1975) which seeks to establish the democratic right of rural workers to organise for their own ends. It is too early to be able to state with any confidence what form such authentic organisations should take and what exactly is involved in their emergency. Clearly, if it is to be meaningful, the process will confront the hostility of established national and local structures. The overwhelming commitment is still towards the introduction of organisation from outside. It is a formidable task in itself to re-examine this dominant practice. Established bureaucracies are not going suddenly to democratise existing structures and permit meaningful participation, WCARRD notwithstanding.[28] The search for an authentic organisational form to facilitate this meaningful participation is under way although this search has yet to be substantially reflected in the available literature.

2.3.4 Empowering

Until quite recently the above interpretations of "participation" have dominated the literature. Since then, and as a reflection of the rural development re-think which we referred to in Chapter 1, an explanation of "participation" as a process of empowering has begun to emerge. The more common interpretation equates "participation" with achieving power: that is power in terms of access to, and control of, the resources necessary to protect livelihood. The following are a number of statements illustrative of this understanding of "participation":

(a) ... the promotion of popular participation implies a redistribution of power (basically a conflictual process) and this calls for a scientific analysis which gives due recognition to political factors, social forces and the role of class in historical processes of social change.[29]

(b) ... participation is concerned with the distribution of power in society, for it is power which enables groups to determine which needs, and whose needs, will be met through the distribution of resources.[30]

(c) ... power is the central theme of participation and ... participatory social action entails widely shared, collective power by those who are considered beneficiaries. The people become agents of social action and the power differentials between those who control and need resources is reduced through participation.[31]

It would appear that, although there is strong evidence in the non-conventional literature of NGOs that the achieving "power" as a fundamental prerequisite to the rural people meaningfully participating in development has been already clearly recognised, it has been the recent research sponsored by UNRISD which has brought the issue to wider prominence. This understanding of "participation" contains three main elements:

- the sharing of power and of scarce resources;
- deliberate efforts by social groups to control their own destinies and improve their living conditions;
- opening up opportunities "from below".

The process in fact generates "countervailing" power to confront the already well-established power configuration within any particular context. This process is also characterised as "creating space", or the imperceptible movement of pushing out the frontiers and of achieving space within which groups might begin to function and to take action. In another sense this process is linked more tangibly to the creation of assets; that is the building up of a minimal economic base for previously excluded groups in order to help them achieve the means to intervene more powerfully in the development process. The interpretation of participation in terms of achieving some kind of political or economic strength is evident in much of the recent literature on the concept, both within the United Nations system and outside. It is now even widespreadly implicit in much of what is written on "participation". Wherever this literature links the process of "participation" with "structural change" or "redistribution of basic common assets", it is impossible to exclude the achieving of "power" as the fundamental prerequisite for these changes. "Participation" to bring about structural change implies the taking of action, and this action can only be taken from a position of power.

The inquiry into "participation" and power is still in its infancy and, apart from one or two well researched examples,[32] we have little substantial knowledge upon the process involved. However, it would appear that there are three main elements which have so far emerged:

- the identification and structuring of discrete socio-economic groups as the basic social unit;
- a process of non-formal education and consciousness raising;
- some form of outside assistance which is instrumental in initiating and accompanying the process of empowering.

We shall examine these three issues in more detail later. Suffice here to emphasise the increasing awareness and acceptance that "participation" is indeed concerned with power. The development literature is overburdened with the documenting of previous "participation" strategies, most of which it is accepted have failed in terms of giving the majority of rural people any meaningful say in those issues which affect their livelihood. The concept of "participation" as empowering is a radical departure from years of more traditional practice. Although its conceptualisation is simple and its argument difficult to refute, it is correct to say that it both faces formidable barriers and that it is also difficult to imagine governments and locally established structures offering other than powerful opposition. Historically participation has rarely been willingly conceded to previously excluded groups and the encounter between opposing forces is the inevitable result.

2.4 Means or end

A broad distinction can be drawn in the vast amount of literature and the practice of "participation" between "participation" as a means or as an end. Where "participation" is interpreted basically as a means it is essentially describing a state or an input into a development programme; where it is interpreted as an end in itself, it refers to a process the outcome of which is meaningful participation. There is controversy, of course, as to whether "participation" as means or end is compatible or whether there can be any unity between them. It is a fundamental distinction and one which has enormous implications for the nature of "participation" and the approaches adopted for its achievement.

Until recently, and either implicitly or explicitly, the notion of "participation" as a means has dominated development practice. The two main vehicles for implementing this notion of "participation" were:

(a) community development programmes which were aimed at "preparing" the rural population to collaborate with government development plans; and

(b) the establishing of formal organisations (co-operatives, farmers' associations, etc.) which were to provide the structure through which the rural people could have some contact with and voice in development programmes.

There can be no doubt that considerable "economic" development was achieved as a result of the above strategy but the evidence suggests that only the few achieved any meaningful participation by this means. This strategy has not resulted in meaningful participation, in any sense of the term, of the poor in rural development. In fact it is a strategy which has resulted in where we are today: confronting the issue of the lack of meaningful participation in rural development.

Participation as an end is the inexorable consequence of the process of empowering and liberation. The state of achieving power and of meaningfully participating in the development process is in fact the objective of the exercise. There is no necessary notion of fixed quantifiable development goals, although these often accompany the process, but the major effort is concentrated upon the empowering process. One NGO in Latin America described the objective of its work in this field as follows:

> The creation of groups able to diagnose and analyse their own problems, to decide upon collective action and to carry out such action to deal with these problems, independent of outside direction.

Participation in the above sense is not easy to perceive. The end itself becomes difficult to define in precise terms since it is related to the qualitative processes of achieving power and the resulting ability to take independent action. Because of its unsubstantial nature, it is difficult to characterise and to witness. It essentially occurs over time, and only prolonged observation can help in its understanding. At this moment much of the experience to date of this form of participation is confined to project files and field notes and we have little knowledge of its method. It does not lend itself to the bureaucratic inquiries of administrative frameworks nor, to some extent, to established methods of social research. Yet although the evidence suggests that its practice is becoming widespread, our knowledge of it remains unsystematic.

It has been suggested that the unity of participation as both means and end is implicit in a number of national development efforts, i.e. Tanzania, Viet Nam and Ethiopia.[33] Elsewhere the

contradiction remains. Ideally "participation" should incorporate both extremes, but it is difficult to see how these extremes can be reconciled. Where "participation" is the means to achieving previously established development objectives, its strategy is to reform and improve. Where "participation" aims at achieving power in order to demand meaningful participation, it implicitly demands some kind of structural change. Both positions reflect different ideological perspectives. In these circumstances it seems improbable that the divergence can be reconciled.

2.5 Obstacles

There are few who could argue with the following statement:

> ... in spite of insistence on popular participation in United Nations development programmes, an examination of the performance is not encouraging. ... authentic popular participation seldom occurs.[34]

Similarly the FAO ROAP study concluded that organisations which have been established have not in fact led to the participation by the majority of the rural population.[35] There is no shortage of comment in the literature or analysis as to why "participation" has not been achieved. Some dismiss out of hand the very suggestion that there has even been a genuine commitment to participation:

> Even those governments who talk about people's participation want such participation on their own terms. They specify all the rules of the game, neutralise or co-opt all genuine people's organisations and reduce the concept of participation to a farce.[36]

The majority of commentators, however, have tried to explain the causes of the lack of "participation" and, more tangibly, the obstacles which impede its implementation. Inevitably such explanations reflect the ideological paradigm employed by the commentator. In the next chapter we shall examine obstacles in the context of several specific case studies. Here we shall limit ourselves to a general review of the issue.

The identification of obstacles is, therefore, directly related to one's perspective on "participation". In this respect the "means" or "end" dichotomy is illustrative. To view "participation" as a means suggests a set of obstacles usually associated with the operational procedures of the task undertaken. On the other hand, to view "participation" as an end suggests obstacles which are more associated with structural and institutional relationships both at

the national and local level. There is no lack of comment on the obstacles to "participation" with which most readers will be familiar. There seems little point, therefore, in reproducing them at length here.[37] We shall limit ourselves to reviewing the major areas of obstacles which commentators suggest, although such areas are not mutually exclusive:

(i) Operational: In view of the dominance of the understanding of "participation" as a "means" and of its relationship with development programmes, obstacles are identified in terms of the operational mechanism of the development programme. In this respect the Cornell study has become something of a Bible for those who wish to understand the obstacles to "participation" at the development project level.[38] The obstacles (or factors) more commonly referred to include over-centralised planning, inadequate delivery mechanisms, lack of local co-ordination, inappropriateness of project technology, irrelevant project content, lack of local structures and so on. These obstacles in fact refer not only to participation but, to a large extent, are the maladies of many rural development projects. In this respect it is difficult to isolate the obstacles particular to participation. One could go so far as to say that these obstacles have very little to do with "participation". These obstacles represent the instruments of an approach which packages a product and then invites collaboration and presents this as "participation". Whilst the issues referred to are genuine and very common difficulties which most rural development projects confront, it is very difficult to feel that these issues can be managed locally and manipulated in a way favourable to meaningful participation.

(ii) Cultural: Our understanding and sensitivity towards the cultural obstacles which constrain rural people from participation has grown in recent years. Previously the literature explained people's attitude towards "participation" largely in terms of the supposed "resistance to change". Writers such as Freire, however, took us emphatically into the people's world and introduced us to such concepts as "marginalisation", "dependence", and "oppression". For these commentators the rural masses constituted the "culture of silence" with no access to, voice or participation in, development. This analysis spawned a whole new genre of explanation as to why rural people do not participate in rural development programmes.

It is only quite recently, therefore, that development workers have become sensitive to the accumulation of pressure and historical tradition which overwhelms most rural people and constrains their willing "participation". Hunter's recent study admirably highlights the inherent weakness of most rural people, their fears of opposition and their weariness to outside cajoling to get involved.[39] The rural poor understand the constraints upon their own effective action and, as experience in Latin America has shown, it is a daunting task to encourage the rural people to take the initiative and seek participation.

(iii) Structural: Both (i) and (ii) above are inextricably tied up with the structural support or opposition they receive. These structural obstacles, local, national and international, dictate the climate in which participation can occur. It is in this area of structural constraints that much of the UNRISD study is located.[40] It is a fact that in most countries the dominant relations of power and production and the ideological values legitimising them constitute powerful structural obstacles to the promotion of popular participation. In UNRISD's terms these are the structures and ideologies of "anti-participation" since they help perpetuate grossly unequal access to and control over societal wealth and power. It is argued that the persistence of these "anti-participatory" structures has caused the failure of many local level initiatives to promote participation.

These structural obstacles are fundamental to achieving participation and it is erroneous to think otherwise. The structure disseminates to the regional and local level and pervades all forms of formal and informal institutions and relationships. The structure dictates the terms of participation and reacts oppressively if those terms are redefined; its aim is to keep the rural people in their place, as labour power and possibly as consumers. Participation initiatives emanating from below, therefore, are faced with the dilemma of attempting to flourish within the context of the existing structure or of seeking positively to influence the structure. Much participation field endeavour takes the former course and pushes at the frontiers; others challenge the structure and are correspondingly dealt with.

2.6 Comment

The purpose of this chapter has been to examine conceptually the varied dimensions of participation. Such a task is important

if only to stress that the concept is multi-dimensional and is unable to be presented in any singular form. Similarly the link between development analysis and participation has been emphasised, thus, it is hoped, illustrating to those still in doubt that the act of participation is not neutral. Just as all intervention in rural development is predicated on a particular perception of development, so statements on participation reflect the ideological paradigm being used. It is simply not possible to consider participation as some kind of quantifiable ingredient to be injected into a development project. It is essentially a qualitative process which, if it is to be meaningful, implies some fundamental shifts in thinking and action.

As such, therefore, it is impossible to present a universal list of those factors which constrain this process. Any discussion on obstacles must be related to the particular interpretation of participation adopted. In this sense, we shall examine a number of case studies in the next chapter and note the factors which affect their differing approaches to participation. It would be possible to examine one or more of the different interpretations and suggest the main areas of such constraints, as has already been done in the literature.[41] It is difficult to avoid the conclusion, however, that the overriding obstacle to meaningful participation by the rural poor in the development process lies with the prevailing socio-political structure. It is folly to ignore this fact, as it is to propose prescriptions which imply changes in the structure which are unrealistic. The dominant paradigm of development thinking is a powerful influence on development practice and severely constrains the consideration of radical alternatives.

Yet it is important to learn from practice. After the widespread influence of the community development approach in the 1950s and 1960s and since the mid-1970s, there has been an increasing number of rural development projects which have consciously, in one form or another, sought to promote participation. The practice has been undertaken by government-sponsored projects as well as by a highly diversified network of NGOs. Participation is a live, dynamic process and thus there is a limit to the amount we can learn merely from its conceptualisation. We shall now, therefore, examine a number of examples of its practice which reflect the range of interpretations of participation and which may help us to give the concept more form and meaning.

Notes:

[1] See for example, Marshall Wolfe: Popular participation in development: Conceptual framework, New York, (United Nations, Department of Technical Co-operation for Development), 1982, paper prepared for the International Seminar on Popular Participation, Ljubljana, 17-25 May 1982, for a discussion of participation in these terms.

[2] A. Pearse and M. Stiefel: Inquiry into participation: A research approach (Geneva, UNRISD, 1979). Pearse and Stiefel discuss this understanding of participation in terms of a "process of incorporation".

[3] J. Migdal: Peasants, politics and revolution (Princeton University Press, 1974, pp. 237-252); also I. Askew: Assessment of local participation techniques in the provision of fertility regulating services (University of Exeter, Institute of Population Studies, 1982).

[4] United Nations: Popular participation as a strategy for promoting community level action and national development, New York, (United Nations, Department of International Economic and Social Affairs, 1981).

[5] Many statements on "participation" deal with complex issues in very generalised terms. A common example of this is the frequent reference to "decentralisation" as critical to a process of participation. Such references rarely discuss the formidable obstacles and resistance to the centralisation of established bureaucracies.

[6] UNRISD: Dialogue about participation (Geneva) 1981, No. 1 p. 5.

[7] Md. A. Rahman: "Reflections", in Development: Seeds of change (Rome, SID, 1981, No. 1, p. 43).

[8] Economic Commission for Latin America: "Popular participation in development" in Community Development Journal (Oxford), Vol. 8, No. 3, 1973.

[9] Uma Lele: The design of rural development (Baltimore, Johns Hopkins University Press, 1975).

[10] F.A.N. Lisk: "Popular participation in basic-needs orientated development planning", in Labour and Society (Geneva), Vol. 6, No. 1, 1981.

[11] N.T. Uphoff and J. Cohen: Feasibility and application of rural development participation: A state of the art paper (Cornell University, 1979).

[12] WHO: Activities of the World Health Organization in promoting community involvement for health development (Geneva, 1982).

[13] Md. A. Rahman: "Concept of an inquiry", op. cit.

[14] Pearse and Stiefel, op. cit., p. 8.

[15] Uphoff and Cohen, op. cit. This text has become something of a standard work in terms of this particular interpretation of participation.

[16] This was a conclusion of the recent International Seminar on Popular Participation held in Ljubljana, Yugoslavia. See United Nations: Report of the International Seminar on Popular Participation (New York, United Nations Department of Technical Co-operation for Development, 1982).

[17] D. Curtis et al.: Popular participation in decision-making and the basic needs approach to development: Methods, issues and experiences (Geneva, ILO, 1978; mimeographed World Employment Programme research working paper; restricted), p. 1.

[18] WHO: Report on a WHO/UNICEF Intersectoral Workshop on Primary Health Care (Geneva, 1982), annex.

[19] idem: Activities of the World Health Organization in promoting community involvement for health development, op. cit., p. 6.

[20] C. Van Wijk-Sijbesma: Participation and education in community water supply and sanitation programmes (The Hague, IRC, 1981).

[21] See, for example, A.J. Ledesma et al.: 350 million rural poor: Where do we start? (Bangkok, United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, 1980).

[22] FAO: Rural Organisations Action Programme (ROAP), Research guidelines and Participation of the poor in rural organisations (Rome, 1979).

[23] It could be argued that The peasant's charter (Rome, FAO, 1981) and the references therein to peasants' organisations fall within this category.

[24] We offer no specific reference here, as few references exist in the formal literature. In Chapter 3, case studies 3.3 and 3.4 are examples of this approach to people's organisations and the references presented there will be relevant.

[25] FAO: Participation of the poor in rural organisations, op. cit., p. 63.

[26] Md. A. Rahman: Participatory organisations of the rural poor (Geneva, ILO, 1977: mimeographed World Employment Programme, research working paper; restricted); D.F. Hodsdon: "The administration and activities of a young organisation of rural workers in India", in Agricultural Administration, Vol. 8, No. 4, July 1981.

[27] See, for example, case study 3.3. The Bhoomi Sena example is perhaps the only detailed account available of this particular approach.

[28] United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America, op. cit.

[29] UNRISD: Dialogue about participation (Geneva) 1981, No. 1, p. 3.

[30] D. Curtis et al., op. cit., p. 6.

[31] W. Fernandes and R. Tandon (eds.): Participatory research and evaluation (New Delhi, Indian Social Institute, 1981), p. 5.

[32] P. Oakley and D. Winder: "The concept and practice of rural social development: Common trends in Latin America and India", in Manchester papers on development (University of Manchester, Department of Administrative Studies, 1981).

[33] A. Bhaduri and Md. A. Rahman (eds.): Studies in rural participation (New Delhi, Oxford and IBH Publishing Co., 1982).

[34] Pearse and Stiefel, op. cit., p. 4.

[35] FAO/ROAP: Participation of the poor in rural organisations, op. cit.

[36] K. Bhasin: Participatory training for development (Rome, FAO), p. 28.

[37] Several studies present lists of the kinds of obstacles/factors which influence participation. We reproduce two such lists here:

(a) Government policy
Availability of external resources
Decentralisation
Availability of local leaders
Traditional practices
Willingness to change
Awareness of benefits of participation
Availability of communications

WHO: Community involvement in PHC (Geneva, 1977).

(b) Centralisation
Lack of information/data
Complexities of planning processes
Costs
Attitudes of planners
Popular resistance to participate

United Nations: Popular participation as a strategy for promoting community level action and national development, op. cit.

[38] J. Cohen et al.: Rural development participation: concepts and measures for project design, implementation and evaluation (Cornell University, Centre for International Studies, 1977).

[39] G. Hunter: A hard look at directing benefits to the rural poor and at participation (London, ODI, 1981).

[40] Pearse and Stiefel, op. cit.

[41] See note 37 above.

Chapter 3

THE PRACTICE OF PARTICIPATION

Our concern in this chapter is to examine critically a number of examples of the practice of participation in order to further our understanding of how it is implemented at the rural development programme or project level. Despite, however, the vast amount of literature, the task is not as straighiforward as it might appear. This is because little of this literature actually deals directly with the perspective of participation which is the subject of this paper. The literature on the "bigger" projects might describe in detail the means of participation i.e. credit programme/farmers' organisation, but few isolate the concept in any detail or analyse its implementation. On the other hand the literature on the smaller, grass-roots project is non-conventional in nature and not readily available. In short we have very few well-written case studies of participation in practice. It is one thing to describe the apparatus of participation; it is another thing to state beforehand a meaningful definition of participation and present an analysis in those terms. In fact this vast amount of literature can be divided into four broad categories:

(a) studies of peasant/urban labour etc. movements which illustrate processes of social change and the increasing involvement of previously excluded groups from the wider society;

(b) works of a theoretical/conceptual level but which do not deal with implementation;

(c) studies on rural organisations where the emphasis is upon the establishing and the structuring of the organisation. Participation within this context is limited to very few people and is not very helpful for considering more massive forms of participation;

(d) the greater part of the relevant project documentation presents participation as part of the project's objectives (i.e. water supply/package programmes). However, this documentation does not tend to discuss participation in isolation, but often incorporates it into general project discussion.

The difficulty also is not the lack of examples of supposedly participatory activities; it is the lack of examples which are not

just a description of these activities but which establish beforehand an operational understanding of participation and, on that basis, analyse and explain the activities. In other words, reading some of the case study material, it is very difficult to understand clearly the study's working definition of participation which would serve as an indicator of the project's success or otherwise. All this is, of course, a reflection of the general problem. In too many case examples it is assumed that the project activity will bring about participation by its very action (for that is one of its expected consequences) with the result that project implementation is explained in tangible (quantifiable) terms and not with the intangible quality of participation, which seems to defy quantification. On the other hand, where the project consciously seeks to explain its activities, in terms of some process of participation, the material is not very substantial and thus our knowledge of how to do this is still developing.

The selection of case studies is no easy task. Our study did not commission any field work which could be included in the text. We are constrained by the material which is available. There are a number of case studies which supposedly illustrate the process of participation but few contain the kinds of information wanted for our analysis. Also we have tried to avoid a situation where we are limited to one particular text or article and have, in effect, to base our analysis on that one source. We have selected, therefore, from the few case studies upon which there is a bit more material in order to make our analysis more plausible.

In selecting our case studies we have tried to include examples to reflect the differing interpretations of participation as discussed in Chapter 2. In view of the FAO/ROAP study and the substantial documentation therein, we decided not to include a case study on organisation as a vehicle of participation. Where possible we try with each of the cases to:

(i) examine the understanding of participation;
(ii) critically review the methodology employed;
(iii) analyse the case's achievements in terms of participation.

We shall conclude by analysing the substantive issues which arise from our examination of the cases. It should be noted that section 3.2 is not a study of one particular rural health programme, but a composite study of material on a number of cases. Also the

Ethiopian experience is not a case study in the strict sense of the term. We have interpreted the Ethiopian experience as a national programme to bring about participation in rural development and include in it the belief that it presents an interesting national perspective of the concept under study.

3.1 Small farmer development programme (SFDP) - Nepal

Along with FAO/ROAP study and the recently established PPP, the SFDP in Asia represents FAO's major commitment to the implementation of participation at the programme level. It was begun in Nepal in 1975 and has since spread to other south-east Asian countries. The FAO's involvement in the SFDP is based on the assumption that people's participation in rural development depends on strong support and commitment by government. The SFDP, therefore, is a combination of institutionalised credit, effective delivery and group/organisational development, and it is aimed at those disadvantaged groups in the Nepalese rural sector which previously had little access to institutional support. The original pilot project sought to motivate small farmers and landless rural workers to form organisations of their own around a common income-raising activity based on group work plans and group action supported by credit and supervised by extension staff. The pilot scheme was judged a success and by May 1979, some 370 groups comprising 3,992 small farmers had been set up.[1]

(a) Understanding of participation

The understanding of participation in the SFDP is based upon three main elements: Organisation, delivery/receiving mechanism and micro-level planning. Previously few of the small farmers and landless workers of Nepal were in any either formal or informal organisation. Without such organisation it is impossible for development projects to make contact with such groups, because of the administrative requirements of formal intervention and the need for some kind of point of contact. The first task of the SFDP programme, therefore, was to help to organise the small farmers into structured groups. With the formation of organisation, the means would exist for the functioning of the delivery/receiving mechanism. The argument was that small farmers don't participate because they don't have the structure to function as a receiving mechanism and, therefore, are inadequate outlets for the delivery mechanism (i.e. credit/extension services). If this mechanism could be instituted,

small farmers would be able to participate. Finally the existence of organisation and delivery/receiving mechanism means that the small farmers can, within the context of the credit programme, participate in discussing and planning the application of the credit received.

Essentially the SFDP interprets participation in terms of creating some assets for those small farmers previously economically disadvantaged. These assets and the strength achieved as a result of development should enable these small farmers to seek and obtain benefits from development programmes. It is, therefore, participation in the benefits of development and evaluations would suggest that, for the small farmers concerned, these benefits did accrue.[2] This is in fact the way the studies on the SFDP explain the situation and less attention has been given to widening the perspective in terms of a broader understanding of participation. The participation is largely economic, or at least it is explained that way, although references can also be found to other less tangible objectives which suggest that the group development might lead to the small farmers attempting to transform their environment by collective effort. One important aspect of this is the linking of the different small farmer groups' efforts so that, with the greater strength such linking could bring, more widespread pressure could be put on the existing structure to deliver the development goods.

(b) Method

The two main elements in the SFDP method are the organisation of groups and the work of the group organiser/action research fellow. On the assumption that institutionalised credit is to be made available and the delivery mechanism can deliver the appropriate inputs, the process begins. It will be useful to look briefly but separately at these two elements:

Organisation of groups

The incentive for group formation is the offer of external credit. The groups become the receiving mechanism which seeks a fair share of production inputs and services from the delivery mechanism. Although the delivery mechanism was directed towards groups of men, women's groups were also set up within the SFDP. The basic purposes of these women's groups were family planning, training in weaving and nutritional education.[3] They also provide a structure for decision-making and management as well as helping

to safeguard members' interests through collective representation. It is suggested that an optimum size for a grass-roots group is between 15-20 members and it is emphasised that, in terms of composition, groups should be internally homogeneous. The experience to date has suggested a number of alternative bases for group composition.[4]

The Small Farmers' Development Manual, which has resulted from the experiences of the SFDP, details the processes involved in group formation. The key thing to note is that the groups are deliberately organised by an external body and do not emerge through purely endogenous means. This process comprises a number of basic steps: checking availability of credit, village survey, selection, formation, distribution of responsibilities and determination of functions. The group is by then established and functioning, within the framework of established procedures and operations, as the receiving mechanism.[5] The groups are in fact the means by which the small farmers participate in the development process.

Group organiser/action research fellow (GO/ARF)

The GOs are the "initiators not the permanent crutches" of the group development process. In general terms the GO is seen as a facilitator of the participation process. He/she is not considered permanent and, once the groups become "self-propelling", the GO is expected to withdraw. The GO's task is to "guide" the groups to self-reliance, a state defined largely in economic terms. The GOs are assigned to work in a specific rural area and their main task is the formation of the groups following the process outlined above. The GO's duties are distinct from those of regular extension workers: the GOs complement such workers but do not replace them.

The GO's basic relationship, therefore, is with the groups. His/her involvement is close and the GO has a critical role in the whole process of credit availability, group discussion and decision. Clearly the issue of dependence cannot be overlooked here and the SFDP Manual, conscious of this probable consequence, guides the GO with "simple methods" to facilitate understanding and participation by the small farmer. Despite the crucial role of the GO, it is not possible to find in the literature any indication or discussion of the preparation needed to become a GO or of the skills or areas of knowledge considered critical for the processes involved. But perhaps essentially the process is limited; if the credit is made

available, the GO facilitates the groups' access to it. The groups appear to be formed very quickly, the GO goes into operation and the delivery and receiving mechanisms come into contact.

(c) Analysis

Although a substantial manual has been written based on the SFDP and a number of studies undertaken of the SFDP's operations, there does not appear to be any kind of in-depth analysis of the effects of the SFDP in terms of facilitating participation. The reporting to date, and the evaluation commissioned in 1979, concentrate understandably on the quantifiable aspects of the programme, i.e. numbers of groups/families, credit disbursed and production increases. Some comment is made on the issue of participation but, although just as important, it is less substantial than the quantifiable aspects. A review of this comment highlights the following points:

(i) undoubtedly the group organisations have been a powerful instrument in facilitating the access to development of previously excluded groups. As more than one commentator pointed out, however, continued access is dependent upon the availability of institutionalised credit. It is uncertain if the dynamism of participation could be maintained if the credit faltered;

(ii) the issue of dependence on the GO/ARF is frequently referred to. The groups are expected to become "self-propelling" and seek further participation. But this will be impossible if self-reliance is not developed;

(iii) much of the emphasis on participation is explained in terms of small farmers' active participation in the groups, and not necessarily their achieving of any effective participation in the wider context of the Nepalese rural society;

(iv) the issue of self-propulsion is critical to assessing the effective participation achieved by the SFDP. Otherwise this participation becomes limited by existing institutional arrangements.

The SFDP's impact upon Nepalese rural women has been limited to activities of a traditional nature, as we referred to above. Recent research has indicated the enormous burdens under which Nepalese rural women toil and the vital contribution that they make to the

nation's agricultural development. This research concluded that the main problem is that not enough is known about how to address projects towards the specific needs of Nepalese women. The SFDP has certainly had some impact, but the obstacles to any kind of meaningful involvement by rural women in Nepal remain formidable.[6]

Although this evidence to date has tended to emphasise the tangible effects of the SFDP, some comment has been made upon the increasing participation. One study argues that the small farmers are no longer afraid to get involved:

> On the basis of their group strength the peasants are gradually coming out of their so-called culture of silence. They have a voice now to demand various services ... they are becoming members of local co-operatives in ever-increasing numbers ... and small farmers have been elected to local Panchayat bodies. Slowly but surely all this is increasing the strength of the poorest peasants vis-à-vis the big landholders and money-lenders.[7]

Undoubtedly the SFDP has given the poor some assets and also some economic strength. The key issue is to make this economic strength independent and self-sustaining. Effective participation for the Nepalese rural poor (both men and women) will come when they can have some meaningful influence upon development issues and decisions as a result of their own ability to participate.

3.2 Participation in rural health

In the past decade or so great efforts have been made to incorporate some notion of participation into rural health programmes. Much of the current literature on such programmes stresses the importance of participation to successful programmes and argues the inalienable right of rural people to have some say in the solution of their health problems. This literature does, however, understandably concentrate upon the health aspects of such programmes and the "participation" has not been readily understandable. Although our review of the material was limited, we would tend to have sympathy with the following statement:

> Community participation as an element of primary health care was not sufficiently brought out, because the ways in which the people take a direct part in discussions and in projects of interest to them are not clearly explained in most of the country reports.[8]

Even a complete text on a community health project in Ecuador, despite its title, proved elusive in actually understanding the mechanics of participation.[9]

(a) Understanding of participation

Although rural health programmes are a priority of many governments, the limited access by the rural people to established health services is a common problem. Few governments, however, have the resources to establish widespread rural health services. There are also other reasons which explain this situation, and some of these are cultural and based on the existence of traditional health structures and practices. The more active participation of the rural people is seen as a remedy to this situation. Such participation would be beneficial for a number of reasons:

(i) make community financial and human resources available to government for rural health programmes;

(ii) improve communications on health matters between government and people;

(iii) incorporate traditional health values, beliefs and structures into modern practice.

The emphasis currently is very firmly on encouraging and actively promoting the participation of the people in rural health programmes. The following WHO statement illustrates this concern:

> Community involvement for health development is understood to refer to a process to establish participation between government and local communities in planning, implementation and use of services in order to increase local self-reliance and social control over health care. Community involvement means that people, who have both the right and the duty to participate in solving their own health problems, have greater responsibilities in assessing the health needs, mobilising local resources and suggesting new solutions, as well as creating and maintaining local organisations.[10]

An interesting feature of the above statement is the use of the term "involvement". It may be purely a semantic difference, but perhaps the use of the term "involvement" signifies a particular degree of participation. What does emerge from the various statements on community participation is that this participation is seen as a vital ingredient in the provision of rural health services. The involvement of the rural people is actively sought both in terms of determining health objectives and in deciding upon an appropriate course of action. This community involvement is indispensable to the success of a rural health project.

(b) Method

As rural health programmes are understandably more concerned specifically with medical issues, the literature is less informative

on how participation is encouraged in such programmes. There is, however, no shortage of statements on the kinds of issues important in encouraging participation, even if many of these statements are very generalised. The emphasis is more on what to do, rather than how to do it. For example, a study summarising the WHO work in promoting community involvement in health development suggested the following measures:

(i) delegation of responsibility to the local level of decisions on health care;

(ii) creation of community health councils;

(iii) foster individual responsibility;

(iv) develop mechanisms for people to participate in national level health decisions.[11]

More specifically, a report from Ethiopia suggested the following three key elements:

(i) sensitisation, awareness building and motivation of the community;

(ii) literacy and information campaigns;

(iii) promotion of local health organisations.

If, however, one reads between the lines, a picture can emerge of how community participation is encouraged. A review of a number of studies suggests that the following are key elements in stimulating this participation:

(i) intervention/survey: contact at the local level, seeking assistance from local officials;

(ii) explanation: of the health programme's objectives and congruence of those objectives with local needs;

(iii) mobilisation/discussion: the stimulating of interest and awareness of the programme;

(iv) propaganda/campaign: spreading the knowledge of the programme;

(v) involvement: enlisting the support and help of local people: structuring local organisations as vehicles of this support;

(vi) delegation: continued involvement in maintenance health facilities and future health programmes.

The above is not a model; nor are we suggesting that it is a process easily discernible in all rural health programmes. It

merely indicates the broad nature of the process and the stages involved. It is also an official process and reflects the activities of government-sponsored health programmes. We have not reviewed any literature on NGO-supported health programmes and so cannot comment on the relevance of the above to those programmes.

(c) Analysis

At a UNICEF/WHO workshop held in Mozambique in 1980, delegates reported on the state of community participation in health in their own countries. Interestingly in the socialist countries of Ethiopia and Mozambique it was reported that participation was being facilitated through local associations and the party structure. Elsewhere, and apart from Ujamaa in Tanzania, the reports were less encouraging. One country actually reported that participation was only a means of mobilising finance.[12]

In all cases, however, the association of participation with mobilisation was prominent, and this appears to be a key dimension in terms of rural health programmes. In other respects references to participation in rural health seem to lack supporting evidence. Statements, for example, which urge community involvement in national level health planning, whilst laudable, overlook the formidable obstacles of implementation which the literature rarely discusses. In rural health programmes there is consultation, there is discussion and there is considerable effort spent on seeking the involvement of the people. More active participation is related to the community directly assuming on-going responsibility for maintaining health facilities. However, it rarely involves the people participating in determining those causes of, and solutions to, their state of poor health which might lie outside the immediate concern of medical attention.

3.3 Bhoomi Sena, India

The Bhoomi Sena experience is one of the few of an entirely new genre of grass-roots examples which has been the subject of extensive study and thus provides information for analysis. For this reason we include it here. It is an example of an approach to working with previously excluded groups which is quite widespread elsewhere, principally in Latin America and the Asian subcontinent. We include it here, therefore, as illustrative of a more widespread movement.

The Bhoomi Sena (Land Army) Movement in the Palghar District of Maharashtra State, India, is a spontaneous indigenous movement forging a bond between the adivasis (tribals) and other poor groups in the region into a united force. The movement concerned itself principally with the tribal men but, as it intensified, it touched the women who, within tribal society, occupied an openly subordinate position. Over the years the adivasis gradually lost their land to the moneylending sawkars. In 1970 by a collective decision of the adivasis this loss was resisted and crops seized. Bhoomi Sena was launched. After the initial action, however, the movement faltered and became enveloped in a programme of technical assistance and financial paternalism. This brief flirtation failed to tackle fundamental problems and the Bhoomi Sena Movement re-emerged in a new phase: the adivasis were now committed to taking action themselves to tackle these problems. In 1976 Bhoomi Sena took this new course and began a process which in the next three years spread throughout the district.[13]

(a) Understanding of participation

In the context of Bhoomi Sena participation has been defined as:

> "A process of creative social involvement by those concerned in defining and fulfilling their needs. It is not a passive taking part in activities designed by others: nor an act of mere consuming the fruits of economic and social activity. It is the taking of initiatives to decide what is to be done and how, and to do it.

Participation is essentially concerned with power. Bhoomi Sena is concerned with mobilisation for political struggle as the only means to give previously excluded groups any influence in the development process. Bhoomi Sena became "People's power" which implied spontaneous collective action by the people, as opposed to centrally directed action. Furthermore, the assertion of the people implies self-reliance, a process of breaking away from previous economic and cultural ties of dependence. To achieve this self-reliance, organisation becomes important. But not the type of organisation which creates formal power, but one which reflects the will and the interests of the people involved.

Participation in the Bhoomi Sena sense, therefore, is closely identified with spontaneity and self-reliance, as opposed to formal organisation and dependence which characterised previous efforts to involve the adivasis in development. This participation

expresses itself in the form of the people's struggle against oppression and exploitation, the assertion of their right to self-determination and the establishing of organisational forms which can release the people's creativity. It is in fact an exercise in liberation from the psychological and economic forces that have historically oppressed the adivasis and the emergency of a countervailing power to meet head-on the challenge of the forces. Participation is not imposition or co-option but the empowering of previously weak groups with the collective strength to intervene to tackle their problems.

(b) Method

The Bhoomi Sena method is essentially one of "conscientisation". Readers may be familiar with this concept and aware of its importance in the writings of Paulo Freire and others. This is linked with Bhoomi Sena to the process of "endogenous knowledge-building" whereby the adivasis develop their knowledge in order to enhance their capacity for self-management of the tasks that confront them. Much has been written on the method of Bhoomi Sena which has been described as follows:

> ... To stimulate processes of collective reflection in which individuals are encouraged to articulate their own experiences, perceptions and thoughts, followed by collective discussion of what has been expressed, with a particular effort to understand the structural features of the experiences narrated that generate a commonality of individual perceptions.

The method reflects Freire's reflection-action (praxis) and is conducted within a framework of dialogue and collective reflection. An important instrument in this process is the shibir or camp for collective reflection. The object of the shibir is to share experiences and perceptions of oppression and to decide upon collective action. The shibir method became fundamental to the movement and different forms have been experimented with i.e. listening/narrating and understanding/explaining. At the shibir the adivasis did most of the talking whilst the organisational cadres initiated the discussion and sometimes attempted to give it direction. Finally the growth and spread of the movement necessitated some kind of organisational form to give it structure. As a result, adivasis's organisations Tarun Mandals were established. In order to sustain the general struggle, these village level organisations were needed to help organise local effort. But the initiative to establish a Tarun Mandal was at the village level and evolution was an autonomous process without central direction.

The controversial aspect of the Bhoomi Sena method (and an issue of debate within Freirian methodology generally) centered on the outsider. The outsiders in this sense were the organisational cadres that supported the movement. One study expressed the view of the Bhoomi Sena leadership on this issue as follows:

> We need outside help for analysis and understanding of our situation and experience, but not for telling us what to do.

The outsider must not offer ready-made solutions, but must first try to understand what the local issues are and help the adivasis articulate them. The principle should be one of minimum intervention, offering support and advice when required. The Vanguard (central cadre of Bhoomi Sena) has a supportive role to play but must not stultify the emergence of self-reliance.

(c) Analysis

The evidence suggests that in tangible terms the Bhoomi Sena movement has had considerable effect in Palghar district. This quantifiable effect has been threefold:

(i) the movement spread and took in more than the original villages in the Junglepatti area. In the three years 1975-78, the movement spread over 120 villages with a corresponding growth in the number of Tarun Mandals;

(ii) the process of conscientisation has resulted in action to tackle common problems. These included:
- freedom from labour bondage,
- implementation of minimum wage law,
- collective contingency funds;

(iii) the movement has grown sufficiently in strength for its candidate to seek successfully a place in the State Assembly in 1978.

The movement, in fact, influenced similar efforts in other parts of the State of Maharashtra where one of the authors visited two similar movements in 1980.

More qualitatively a recent study suggests that in the past decade the Bhoomi Sena movement has had a profound effect upon the position of tribal women in Palghar district. This study concludes that the tribal women have been "radicalised" by the Bhoomi Sena: molestation has ceased, forced labour has virtually ended and the women have gained a sense of self-importance and self-possession.

Although the study recognises the clear "social inequalities" that tribal women continue to suffer, it argues that the fundamental problems which the tribal women confront (i.e. minimum basic wage) cannot be understood without consideration of the common problems which they face with men as tribals. Clearly a careful analysis of the effect of a movement like Bhoomi Sena upon the historically subordinate position of tribal women in India could teach us a lot about how to face up to such an entrenched problem which is widespread throughout the Third World.[14]

Bhoomi Sena defines participation as the action of people expressing themselves against oppression and exploitation and includes the search for some kind of organisational form to spearhead this participation. It demonstrates that meaningful participation to be promoted requires that the people concerned understand the complex social and economic relations of which they are a part. In the process of understanding there must be a "redistribution of thinking" and a rejection of the traditional notion that the people have nothing to contribute. Finally it asserts that participation is unquestionably linked with the taking of action, on the basis that such action should not be determined by others but should be based on the people's own knowledge of the situation "at whatever stage this happens to be". The Bhoomi Sena movement is concerned overwhelmingly with groups which previously have had no access to any kind of development assistance. Its approach and its efforts highlight the formidable implications of the achieving of meaningful participation by such groups.

3.4 Fisherwomen and participation - Brazil

The case study under review here is one of the many hundreds of small, and in some cases individual, initiatives to further the participation in the development process of previously excluded groups. Such initiatives are rarely recorded but together they represent the network of non-government involvement in the development process. This particular example is located in the village of Bomtempo in north-east Brazil, a region described as the largest underdeveloped area in the western hemisphere and where, despite the advances of the Brazilian economy, poverty is endemic. It is an area which has been widely studied and in which successive massive developments have failed to make much impact on the widespread poverty.[15]

Although agriculture is the dominant economic activity in this part of Brazil, it is estimated that some 100,000 families live primarily on fishing. Most of those involved in fishing are poor and caught in the perennial trap between low production and small-scale investment. They are organised into government-controlled colonies supposedly to defend their interests. Some women also fish to support the families' incomes. They fish separately and are more restricted to the swamp areas along the banks of the river. Few of the women have any education and, although most are married, they receive little support from their husbands and have assumed the major responsibility for feeding and raising the children. One report on the group depicted their lives as follows:

> They are condemned to a life in the swamps, the sticky mud. They leave early in the morning with a basket, a comb and a bit of water and food. They head out in several crafts and are reality the basis of the swamp society. It is a life of work, struggle, some hope and a few jokes.

In early 1975 an animateur, who worked with a diocesan team, made contact with the fisherwomen and began to work with them.

(a) Understanding of participation

In the context of the fisherwomen's group, the understanding of participation is not dissimilar to that explained in case study 3.3 above. The animateur's analysis of the women's situation confirmed their total marginalisation from any kind of development initiative and their equally total lack of any resources to change the situation. The animateur had been brought up in the school of conscientisation and analysed the women's situation in terms of their fundamental inability to influence the forces that controlled their lives. The women were in effect powerless and lacked any means to have a positive impact upon the forces that constrained them. From the beginning therefore, the animateur saw the basic objectives for her work with the fisherwomen:

(i) that the women should begin to assume the responsibility to direct their lives and not merely accept the direction of others;

(ii) that the women should regain some dignity in their lives;

(iii) that the women should begin to bring some influence to bear upon the fishing colony.

Participation, in the context of the fisherwomen's group, is a process which develops over time. It also results from activities

designed to prepare and strengthen previously excluded groups to become more actively involved. In this case the natural outlet for this participation was the fishing colony. Yet the women had previously been totally excluded from the colony, had no documentation and thus lacked a voice in, and access to, the organisation that was supposed to represent them. Such participation cannot be ordered or ordained; it has to be prepared. It is a participation not by invitation into the fishing colony, but as an expression of right. Without access to some formal organisation of assistance the fisherwomen would never have any hope of improving their lives. The animateur's task was to work with the women in order that they might establish a base in this formal organisation and have the strength to participate effectively.

(b) Method

The case of this fisherwomen's group is one of the few examples available where a record, although somewhat sketchy, has been kept of the animateur's work over a period of time.[16] The animateur began working with the women in 1975 and is still involved with them, although the nature of her work has changed considerably. In trying to understand succinctly the animateur's approach to working with the fisherwomen, Galjart's statement is relevant:

> This approach entails intervention to facilitate the effort of relatively small, local groups in achieving, in a participatory manner, their development goals, and thus enhancing their members' life-chances, in spite of and in opposition to societal mechanisms and processes which influence these chances adversely.

The first two decisions the animateur took were not to impose herself upon the women and not to proceed with any particular reference to time. She spent the first nine months merely observing the women and being observed by them. One afternoon one of the women stopped and spoke to her after a day's fishing. This was repeated on successive days. Then the animateur was invited to fish with the women - "my baptism in the mud" - and that evening sat and chatted with them. The process had begun and continues today. If we examine the animateur's approach to and work with the women in the past seven years, we can discern a number of distinct states:

(i) a lengthy process of contact and building up of mutual confidence;
(ii) meeting group comes together;
(iii) identification of issues - discussions on particular topics.

It is impossible to go into the detail of each stage or to suggest a time-frame for each one. The animateur stressed the patience needed in building up links with the women. Also little effort was made to hasten or to formalise the group's structure. Initially there was no structure and meetings were held with a great air of informality. As, however, the group has begun to get involved in the fishing colony, so a more formalised internal structure has developed to direct this involvement. The animateur herself characterised her approach as having two main phases: descobrimento (discovery) when animateur and group establish links between each other and despertar (wake up) when the group's members began to understand the basis of their miserable existence and determined to do something about it.

In view of the intangible nature of the processes involved and the question of time, it is not easy to understand how the animateur worked with the group. The approach of her pedagogy is essentially private, but is based on two main instruments:

- the group meeting;
- the dialogue.

Although there is an increasing amount being written about how one should conduct the two instruments above, we have very little information on their practice. This is because both are intimate and personal processes which are difficult to record. Texts may exist which tell us theoretically how to run groups and conduct dialogue, but the practice at the grass-roots level goes unrecorded. We shall return to this issue in Chapter 4.

(c) Analysis

In purely numerical terms the work of the animateur has resulted in the increasing size and numbers of fisherwomen's groups in the area. Sixteen women attended the first "formal" meeting in 1976; by 1981 the original group had grown to 45 and two other groups had been set up, being a total of over 100 fisherwomen involved in group activities. The groups are purposefully small to avoid the inevitable fragmentation of bigger groups. Some of the original group members have been responsible for diffusing knowledge among the local fisherwomen of the existence of the group and encouraging new members. In 1980 the first regional meeting of the different groups was held with 71 participants.

But the numerical results hardly reflect the real changes which have taken place. To encourage such groups to consider the issue

of participation actively, and then to undertake some kind of action to get involved, is a daunting task. When the first formal meeting of the group was held in 1976, there was little basis for encouraging participation. After four years of the animateur's pedagogic work with the women, the group felt that they were perhaps now ready to get involved. What were the changes that took place to bring about this situation? The answer lies in the difficult area of qualitative change and the role of subjective assessment in determining this change. The animateur herself explains how she characterised the fisherwomen's group in 1976 and again four years later:

Group in 1976	Group in 1980
No motivation	Feeling of solidarity
Accept paternalistic approach	Willingness to make an effort
Passive	Thinking outside immediate context
Suspicious	
Exploited	Better organised.

As a result of the above qualitative behavioural changes, the group grew in strength and began to take steps to seek solutions to their problems:

(i) a widespread movement began to get the women registered at the colony and to gain legal documentation;

(ii) progressive involvement in the colony's affairs culminating in the election of two women's representatives to the Board at the end of 1981.

The women's groups are part of a wider movement which encompasses over 5,000 people involved in fishing in north-east Brazil. The work of the above animateur and her colleagues has increased these people's involvement in their colonies and their access to the colonies' resources. The colonies then pressurise for change. The movement's most notable achievement has been federal legislation to control the pollution that poisons the rivers they fish.

3.5 The structure of national participation - Ethiopia

The literature on participation refers to a number of examples where, as a result of a radical societal revolution, newly-created governments attempt in one form or another to incorporate the masses in the development of the nation State. China, Viet Nam, Cuba and Ethiopia are such examples. In each of these countries a socialist

revolutionary government has embarked upon a widespread campaign to associate the rural masses with the march of the revolution. Our task here is not to analyse or necessarily pass judgement on any of these socialist revolutions, but to examine one briefly in the context of the purpose of this paper.

The socialist revolutionary movement which began in Ethiopia in 1974 has its roots above all in the historical relationships between the Ethiopian landed élite, the land and the peasantry. Peasant protests and unrest occurred in pre-revolutionary Ethiopia and were highlighted as the incursion of capitalist development which led to land evictions and the general reduction of the peasantry to a marginal existence. The State and the Church were the biggest landowners supported by the landlords and their intermediaries. The peasants in the south were largely reduced to tenancy; in the north, although the communal landholding system gave the peasant access to land, he was still bonded by tribute to the aristocracy and the Crown. Land, the source of livelihood for the Ethiopian peasant, was almost wholly in the hands of others.[18]

In late 1974 the Provisional Military Administrative Council (PMAC) declared Ethiopian socialism. This stressed equality, self-reliance, the dignity of labour and the supremacy of the common good. In economic terms it stressed the need to socialise the means of production so as to eliminate the causes of differentiation and to promote the country's productive forces. In March 1975, a land reform was proclaimed and all rural land was declared the common property of the Ethiopian people. Immediately the effort began to organise the peasants for the part they were expected to play. In December 1975, a proclamation established the peasants' associations which were to be the main vehicle of peasant involvement. Women's associations were also established by the PMAC to represent and promote the interests of the rural women in Ethiopia.

(a) Understanding of participation

From the proclamation of Ethiopian socialism, the concept of greater peasant participation emerged as a cornerstone of the revolutionary process. In the first year the PMAC, launched an offensive to make contact with the rural masses and to begin the process of involving them in the revolutionary transformation. The peasants' associations were quickly proclaimed and, within a short space of time, thousands of associations had been formed. The peasants'

participation was couched in such terms as "collectivisation" and later "co-operativisation" as the PMAC sought to institutionalise a communal form of agriculture.

The process of peasant participation was presented as evolutionary and was governed by three basic principles: voluntary participation, mutual benefits and the strict application of democratic centralism. The key word, of course, is the "voluntary" nature of the participation which would imply that the peasants had a choice to support the process of collectivisation or not. Essentially the approach was to begin by establishing some basic forms of participation (i.e. peasants' associations) which would lead to some kind of higher form with widespread collectivisation of production. The peasants' world was in fact turned upsidedown overnight. Previously they had been totally excluded from any form of involvement in the development of the Ethiopian State (apart from those few who had become involved in capitalist development programmes, i.e. CADU) but now they were being asked to participate actively in the socialist revolution. The main parameters of that revolution had already been drawn: the peasants were to be mobilised to give them support.

(b) Method

The implementation of the Ethiopian socialist revolution began with great speed. Resources were mobilised and the word of the revolution was spread rapidly throughout the country. The PMAC's first priority was to make contact with the rural masses and to link their forces with the revolution's objectives. In this process the objectives of Ethiopian socialism were explained. Initially the enthusiasm was high and undoubtedly there was a feeling in rural Ethiopia of participating in radical transformation.

In the process of institutionalising Ethiopian socialism, the PMAC employed several means:

(i) the Zemecha: the mobilisation of over 60,000 secondary school and university students. These students spread out throughout the country making contact with the rural communities. Their immediate task was to explain and teach the principles of Ethiopian socialism and initiate the formation of the peasants' associations;

(ii) peasants' associations (PA): the lowest administration of the State, the PAs were expected to co-ordinate administrative functions, agitate and mobilise the people to participate

> in political and economic activities and maintain the security of the region. The PAs in effect filled the power vacuum caused by the dismantling of the society. They also were expected to combat the individualistic tendencies of the Ethiopian peasant and help create the structure for a socialist economy.

The establishing of the PAs proceeded at a rapid pace. By late 1975, approximately 18,000 PAs had been formed: by the end of 1977 the number had risen to 28,583 with a membership of some 7.3 million households. The women's associations which were established became dependent upon the PAs in terms of their ability to give women access to land. The PAs' membership was based upon "heads of households" and thus women had little direct access to or involvement in them. The approach had been one of massive mobilisation within the context of the newly-created PAs. There was little subtlety in the process and the Zemecha worked in teams, lived among the peasants, held classes, explained and generally whipped up a sense of collective involvement. Later the process became more professional. As the PMAC moved towards co-operatives and the collective agriculture, so trained cadres of promoters worked with the peasants instituting these specific activities.

(c) Analysis

There can be no doubting the immediate initial impact of Ethiopian socialism. A dormant, feudal society was woken up almost overnight and the message and apparatus of the revolution were quickly spread. There was in fact a "big thrust", a massive exercise in mobilisation which resulted in the nominal involvement of the peasants in the peasants' associations, as we have seen from their impressive numerical spread throughout the country. But there was little effort initially at political consciousness: the peasants' associations and Ethiopian socialism were brought by the Zemecha and the peasants nominally participated because the Zemecha required them to do so. Some studies have referred to the "authoritarian" attitude of the Zemecha students and to the dwindling interest in the PAs once the initial mass mobilisation had run out of steam.

In terms of the impact of Ethiopian socialism on the position of rural women in Ethiopia, recent studies suggest that little fundamental change has occurred. Whilst increased agricultural production resulting from land reform might have helped the daily problem

of food supply, rural women are still dependent on their husbands economically, and therefore their position in Ethiopian society is still subordinate to men. Efforts directed at women have tended to fall within the conventional practice of literacy and health campaigns. Some "consciousness raising" has been achieved but much remains to be done if rural women in Ethiopia are to have some equal and meaningful access to the benefits of rural development.[19]

But the development of the PAs and the activities of the Zemecha only represented the beginning of a process which is currently assuming a more coherent structure. The emphasis since 1978 has been upon the co-operativisation and the collectivisation of the Ethiopian peasantry; the transition to collective agriculture on the basis of co-operative production. Few studies exist to show how this transition is occuring. Yet experiences elsewhere highlight the difficulties of this transition. The participation of the Ethiopian peasant in Ethiopian socialism has proceeded at a pace which is ahead of the peasants' psychological readiness for such dramatic changes. The participation must be seen as evolutionary and supported at appropriate stages by experiences which will help the peasant accommodate to the change. It is one thing to institutionalise the structure of participation and mobilise involvement; it is a different task to break down the centuries-old barriers to involvement and expect the Ethiopian peasant to make the transition overnight.

3.6 Comment

The case studies reveal both the different interpretations of participation that are practiced in the field as well as the enormous complexities involved in operationalising the concept. Participation is not an easily manipulable "thing". Each of our case studies has revealed that it is a concept of many dimensions which have to be clearly understood before "participation" can meaningfully be used in the context of a rural development project. In none of the case studies can it be argued that "participation" had been achieved, apart from perhaps "participation" in terms of benefiting from the development project, i.e. SFDP/health programmes. Of course any such statement is based upon a particular interpretation of "participation". In the SFDP/health programmes, for example, if we defined participation in terms of benefits and involvement in formal organisations, then some "participation" has occurred.

If, however, we define "participation" in terms of capacity for self-sustained development, then perhaps our conclusions might be different. We could reverse the analysis, for example, with the fisherwomen's case study.

Our purpose in labouring the point is to emphasise the multi-dimensional nature of the act of participation in a rural development project. We do this largely because so much of the literature does deal with "participation" as though it were some finite quantity which can be operationalised within the life-span of a project. Our case studies have revealed that this is to take a much too limited view of the complexities of participation and of the processes involved.

We have with each of the case studies analysed the nature of participation in the context of each project. It would be useful now to review these analyses jointly and to make a few general comments upon the practice of participation at the project level:

(a) the importance of research-action. The context of participation must be clearly understood before action is contemplated. This process of research-action must be built into the intervention mechanism;

(b) some form of organisation is fundamental to a process of meaningful participation. Without organisation the would-be participants lack a structure to facilitate the process;

(c) the critical role of the outsider in the process of participation. Apart from the rural health projects, in each of the other cases there was an agent/animateur/organiser whose role was to work specifically within the context of the process of participation;

(d) an inability to manipulate participation in terms of time. In none of the cases could we conclude that a state of participation had been achieved. We have still much to learn in terms of "measuring" participation and understanding directly its more tangible form.

Having reviewed the practice of participation in the context of existing projects, it is appropriate now to consider future strategy. In terms of the rural poor meaningfully participating in rural development projects, the experiences to date have not been very substantial. Could we learn something from our efforts to date and construct a relevant approach? To this issue we now turn.

Notes:

[1] There is now quite a considerable body of literature on the SFDP both in Nepal and in other countries in south-east Asia. It would be tedious merely to present a list here. The bulk of the literature has been brought out under the auspices of either the ILO or the FAO. Of particular use is the manual on small farmer development which has been produced as a result of the SFDP. See FAO: Small farmers development manual (Bangkok, 1978), Vols. I and II.

[2] A.J. Ledesma: 350 million rural poor: Where do we start? op. cit.

[3] In 1979 it was reported that there were ten women's groups associated with the SFDP. By 1981 this number had risen to 19 with a membership of 221. J. Joshi: SFDP Nepal (Bangkok, FAO, 1981), pp. 43-45.

[4] FAO: Small farmers development manual, op. cit., p. 21.

[5] ibid., pp. 21-28 for a detailed review of group formation, procedures and functions.

[6] ILO: Action to assist rural women in Nepal (Geneva, ILO, 1982; mimeographed World Employment Programme research working paper; restricted).

[7] D. Ghai and A. Rahman: The small farmers' groups in Nepal (Geneva, ILO, 1981; mimeographed World Employment Programme research working paper; restricted).

[8] WHO: Report on a UNICEF/WHO Inter-Country Workshop on Primary Health Care (Geneva, 1981), p. 21. It should be noted that section 3.2 does not relate to one particular rural health case study, but it is a composite reconstruction from a number of case studies.

[9] Ministry of Public Health (Ecuador) and Overseas Development Administration (United Kingdom): Community participation in family health (Quito, 1980).

[10] WHO: Activities of the World Health Organization in promoting community involvement for health development, op. cit.

[11] ibid., p. 6. A recent WHO trend report identifies the following key elements in mobilising community involvement: (i) gauging political commitment; (ii) building initiatives; (iii) decentralisation of decision-making; (iv) creating incentives; (v) incentives in health services; (vi) incentives for local communities.

[12] idem: Report of a UNICEF/WHO Workshop on Primary Health Care, Mozambique, 30 Mar.- 3 Apl. 1980 (doc. WHO/PHC/80/1); idem: Community involvement in primary health care: A study of the process of community motivation and continued participation (Geneva, 1977).

[13] The material for case study 3.3 has been drawn from a range of written material on the Bhoomi Sena movement. The two principal references are: (a) G.V.S. de Silva et al.: "Bhoomi Sena: A struggle for people's power", in Development dialogue (Uppsala) 1979 No. 2, pp. 3-77; and (b) Md. A. Rahman: Some dimensions of people's participation in the Bhoomi Sena movement (Geneva, UNRISD, 1981). One of the authors of this study has also visited the area of Bhoomi Sena and seen the effects of its work in terms of the growth of similar movements.

[14] S. Mhatre: Multiple transition for tribal women: A study of tribal women in Palghar Taluka, Maharashtra, India (Geneva, ILO, 1981; mimeographed World Employment Programme research working paper; restricted).

[15] The material for case study 3.4 is almost wholly drawn from project files and other documentation which have never been published. One of the authors of this study has been closely associated with the animateur and the group of fisherwomen over a number of years.

[16] This record has been kept as part of a joint research effort undertaken by the animateur and one of the authors of this study.

[17] B. Galjart: "Counterdevelopment: A position paper", in Community Development Journal (Oxford), 1981, No. 2, pp. 88-98.

[18] Case study 3.5 is drawn from a number of sources which include: J. Markakis and N. Ayele: Class and revolution in Ethiopia (Spokesman Books, 1978), and M. Ottoway: "Land reform in Ethiopia 1974-77, in African Studies Review, Vol. 20, No. 3, pp. 58-90. One of the authors of this study was in northern Ethiopia from 1973 to 1976 and witnessed locally the changes which took place. See P. Oakley: Tigrai rural development study: Social organisation (Hunting Technical Services, 1976), Annex 8.

[19] Z. Tadesse: "The impact of land reform on women: The case of Ethiopia", L. Benería (ed.): in Women and development: The sexual division of labour in rural societies (New York, Praeger, 1982); see also the report of an ILO/JASPA Employment Advisory Mission to Ethiopia (ILO/JASPA, Addis Ababa, Sep. 1982).

Chapter 4

AN EMERGING STRATEGY

4.1 The basis of a strategy

It is widely argued that participation will not have much meaning if it cannot be ensured that the rural poor can effectively participate in rural development. And yet despite the universal commitment to participation, little progress has been made to date in developing appropriate designs and organisational bases geared to facilitate the participation of the rural poor. It is certainly not necessary to list the reasons why such participation has not occurred, as it is highly improbable that readers of this paper will not have some idea of what these reasons might be. More important is to consider whether a strategy to facilitate the participation of the rural poor in development might still be realistic and, if so, the bases of such a strategy.

Before we turn to the content of this strategy, it would be useful to reflect upon the framework within which many government-supported participation strategies are conceived. We have seen that, although participation is a theme which has long historical roots in the processes of rural development, it is in the last few years, and particularly as a result ot the work of the ILO, UNRISD and the FAO that its importance has been highlighted. For example, the WCARRD in 1979 declared:

> Rural development strategies can realise their full potential only through the motivation, active involvement and organisation at the grass-roots level of rural people ... in conceptualising and designing policies and programmes ...

This statement was interpreted in a strategy for participation which stressed four important aspects:

- organisation of the poor;
- government decentralisation;
- planning at the local level;
- participation as the basis of rural development projects.

The above statement and strategy have been widely endorsed and are influential in the consideration of future rural development initiatives. Already the FAO has launched its People's Participation Programme and within the United Nations system generally the agencies are examining their work in the light of the WCARRD Declaration.

The situation, however, is still at the strategy level and there is still much to be done to provide the substance for a relevent approach to participation.

The WCARRD report identifies the fundamental dimension of participation which is concerned with power. The report clearly states that participation is "essential for the realignment of political power in favour of disadvantaged groups". The highlighting of this dimension of participation is critical, even if the WCARRD does not suggest how such power might be achieved. The report is presented within the context of existing political structures and the assumption we must make is that meaningful participation can be stimulated in environments which previously did not help it flourish.

In the final analysis, it is difficult to disassociate "participation" from its relationship with power. As we saw in Chapter 2, this notion of power has been variously expressed. For participation to be meaningful, it must involve some direct access to decision-making and some active involvement in the determining of problems and practices. In the context of rural development projects it implies that the rural poor have some direct say in the policies and actions supposedly designed to improve their livelihood. It is clearly evident that the rural poor of this world do not have any direct say in the policies and actions supposedly designed to improve their livelihood. "Participation" must be seen as an exercise of giving the rural poor the means to have a direct involvement in development projects. In other words they must be given the strength to be able to seek this direct involvement. Participation is not controlled collaboration: it involves working with the rural poor in order that they may be able to exert some influence upon the development that is going on around them. The only way that they will achieve this will be if they achieve some kind of power or authority which will allow them to influence events. Participation is to do with people meaningfully being able to have some influence, and for this to be so they must have some voice and some weight. The participation of the rural poor simply means giving the rural poor a chance to have some realistic chance to influence the decisions that affect their livelihood.

The issue, therefore, is how to mount a strategy of participation based upon the above interpretation. Interestingly much of

the "official" literature is beginning to interpret participation in terms of the above, but the strategies proposed present enormous challenges given the pre-conditions which are established; i.e. "... to facilitate this participation, decentralisation of government decision-making by strengthening supporting delivery systems at the lowest level is required". We are not referring to the considerable material which has recently been generated in terms of projects actually reaching the rural poor: we are referring to the radical scenario of the rural poor playing a direct and influential part in the formulation and implementation of these projects. Although this is the general tenor of the statements made, the reality is that the rural poor do not as yet have any direct part to play in rural development projects.

In considering an appropriate strategy we have to make one major assumption: that the pre-conditions to participation as expressed in the WCARRD documents are not going to occur in the foreseeable future and that existing socio-political frameworks are not going to facilitate meaningful grass-roots participation. We must, therefore, consider a strategy that does not depend, for example, on bureaucratic decentralisation or legislation to encourage local organisations, but which attempts to achieve participation in the context of existing administrative frameworks. This would seem to be the only available way of considering how the rural poor might participate; the evidence to date is that the pre-conditions as suggested have not yet emerged. We must consider, therefore, how to bring about effective participation without waiting for the structural changes generally indicated as indispensable.

4.2 Approach

The literature is growing on the many efforts in the different continents to empower the rural poor and thus to bring about their meaningful participation in rural development. There are a number of examples of such efforts but as the approaches employed are still largely experimental, there is little common terminology and certainly no emerging universal model.[1] Moreover, it is the NGOs who are more directly involved in this experimentation. We have already suggested that the majority of government or "officially" sponsored "participation" projects are more concerned with collaboration and benefits (which are tangible for some) than with creating effective power for the rural poor. In the past decade or

so, therefore, it has been principally the NGOs who have pioneered an approach which aims to empower the rural poor. It is probable, however, that the FAO's recently launched People's Participation Programme and the innovative work with the rural poor being undertaken by the IFAD will in the future contribute to our understanding of a relevant approach.

If we accept the argument that most of the rural development projects supposedly aimed at stimulating the participation of the rural poor do not in fact lead to meaningful and effective participation (i.e. not simply in the benefits of a development project) then perhaps we can understand two important features which characterise rural development projects which do seek effective participation:

(a) project activities to bring about this participation are an end in themselves and the project is designed and staffed to this purpose;

(b) these activities are seen as an essential and necessary foundation to activities of a more economic nature.

In other words we cannot assume that participation will occur merely as a result of project intervention. The "preparation" of the rural people to participate effectively must be seen as an important project activity in itself, both apart and preceding activities of a purely economic nature. The "participation" of the rural poor must become the fundamental objective of the project, as upon that effective participation can then be built the more tangible economic activities. The evidence would suggest that where projects have tried to stimulate "participation" as a result of economic activities, this "participation" is limited to the few, is more concerned with benefits and does not enhance the rural poor's chances of effectively participating in the development going on around them. The process of empowering, of giving strength and a basis for future involvement must be considered as a priority project activity.

A review of a number of such projects in different continents in the first instance reveals a number of common key concepts which characterise the approach employed. We present them here in no systematic order, but more to show the important elements in an approach to effective participation:

(a) the process nature of such project work, in which it is difficult to establish fixed, quantifiable parameters;

(b) the disaggregation of the rural poor and the identification of discrete socio-economic groups as the basic unit of development; (the term "group" is used here to encompass a range of practice from informal, unstructured gatherings of rural people around a common purpose to the more structured formal organisations of the rural poor);

(c) the notion of bottom-up with the absence of any pre-determined models and the emphasis upon the emergence spontaneously of a relevant approach from below;

(d) the principle of self-reliance and the need to reduce a development based upon dependence;

(e) the issue of the control by the groups concerned of the development project activities;

(f) the importance of collective action by the group to tackle the problems which they confront.

This list is not presented as any kind of charter or guiding faith and would not necessarily be acceptable to the different projects we examined. We present them here in order to characterise the nature of the approach, before later examining its method in more detail.

In some cases the basic elements in the approach adopted have been spelt out in a bit more detail and give us a clearer insight into the project's activities. It is not possible to distil from these examples any kind of common framework of approach, even though there are similarities. It would appear that different projects are experimenting with the same broad approach in different parts of the world, which provide us with a richness of material even if none has yet reached (or may ever reach) the stage of becoming a replicable model. We have decided, therefore, merely to reproduce a few cases here to illustrate the nature of the work in progress. We shall not discuss them individually in detail but simply show the main elements in the projects' approaches to achieving participation through empowering:[2]

(i) self-interest
from simple to complex militancy
the tactics of the powerless
project agent and problem identification
(PHILIPPINES)

(ii) mobilisation
conscientisation
assertion
organisation
(INDIA)

(iii)
training
mobilisation/conscientisation
consolidation/expansion
organisation
interaction
(SRI LANKA)

(iv)
critical faculty
participation
organisation
solidarity
articulation
(BRAZIL)

(v)
community action
involvement of poorer sections
no permanent dependence
technical appropriateness of project work
(INDIA)

(vi)
preparation/research
training
reflection
action
(MEXICO)

Although the range of terms employed is wide, there is a remarkable similarity in the above frameworks. Some of the cases, (ii), (iii) and (vi), indicate not only the main elements in the approach but also the sequence of action. The others express more the broad principles with no reference to their relative positions in terms of project implementation. Each approach of course is a product of its particular context and as such it is not possible to contrast and compare. Each has been designed in terms of a specific set of circumstances and their relevance can only be judged within these circumstances. Although, however, the approaches are context specific, we can identify a number of common issues. All of the above approaches, whilst incorporating "economic" activities within the context of the project, are fundamentally designed towards achieving some kind of power or more effective involvement for the rural poor. Also in each of the above cases, the "target group" was small farmers, tenants or the landless who share the common problem of marginalisation and lack of access to resources. Similarly each of the approaches does not express any notion of time. The ultimate aim of the project is expressed in terms of "empowering" and the main elements are described, but little indication is given of the time which the process of empowering takes.

It is intriguing that such relatively similar approaches to the problem of the rural poor have emerged in different continents. Interestingly, and apart from some animation rurale work in West Africa, there is little evidence of the widespread occurrence of an "empowering" approach in that continent, unlike Latin America and the Asian subcontinent. These approaches, therefore, are illustrative of a fairly widespread practice to "empower" the rural poor. We should now turn to examine the methodological basis of this work.

4.3 Method

We are concerned in this section to try to understand how a process of effective participation is brought about. In this respect it is true to say that the literature on Bhoomi Sena is the only detailed and widely available methodological account of this work. There is a vast amount of non-conventional literature from different project sources, but it is scattered, and the time available has not permitted any systematic analysis. One common feature of this literature is that it is highly descriptive: our knowledge of how to explain the process of empowering in the context of rural development projects is still unclear and hence projects tend to emphasise the detail of project activities rather than an analysis of those changes in terms of empowering.

We have, however, examined a number of projects and tried to explain their inherent method in terms of a process with a series of stages or phases. This form of analysis is used to highlight the nature of the process and to show the different activities associated with each stage. We cannot look at a process of participation in the same way that we look at, for example, the extension of a new credit programme; we must understand its essentially evolutionary nature and try to identify the main stages of this evolution. The following are a number of examples of the methodological approach to participation in a number of projects:

(i)

selection of target audiences
formation of groups
action inside the group
action outside the group
autonomy of group
(BRAZIL)

study
creation of groups
training
group decisions
collective action
(SENEGAL)

economic improvement activities
promote receiving mechanism
stimulate linkages with servicing agencies
(PPP)

identification of group
contact with training centre
leadership training
formation of groups
group development
(BANGLADESH)

approach/contact village
spread contact in village
survey
discussion
decision to tackle problems
building up of confidence
decision of action
action committees formed
(INDIA)

Each of the above examples demands, of course, detailed analysis, which could only be done effectively through field work. They are presented merely as sketches of the method implicit in participation projects. Although we can note some similarity of terms used (i.e. formation of groups/taking of action) each of the above methods is specific to a particular context. It would suggest, therefore, that there can be no universal model for stimulating participation at the project level but that also experiences are not so dissimilar that we cannot at least suggest some common elements. We could analyse the examples above and suggest that there are four principal stages to the methodology involved:

- contact with target group;
- process of group structuring and formation;
- preparation of work with group in terms of their future participation;
- action to implement the participation.

The above is a purely hypothetical framework, although a detailed analysis of project documentation would support the relevant, if not the relative, importance of each of the stages. We could now enter into more detail by examining a number of common features of the above framework.

4.3.1 Pedagogy

The process of empowering for participation is essentially a non-formal educational activity. Participation is indeed an educational process but one in which the conventional nature of education is turned upsidedown. A number of terms have been used to describe this educational process, the more common of which are "education for liberation" and "conscientisation". The form of education becomes a process by which a person who previously has been the mere object and passive recipient of knowledge is transformed into the subject and active creator of knowledge. It is a radical departure from the classical, formal educational approach, and it seeks to liberate individuals from the environment which constrains them.

It is only in the past decade that such a form of education has been experimented with at the rural project level. Although the practice is increasing, there are few substantial studies which give us an insight into how such an educational approach works.[3] Much of the experience to date is restricted to project files. However, an examination of some of these files reveals a number of important elements in this pedagogy:

(a) it is non-directive and seeks not to impose knowledge and ideas but to explore the rural poor's socio-political environment in order to structure an understanding of the problems to be tackled;

(b) it is essentially a dialogical process, in that it seeks discussion on equal terms and not, in the more conventional extension model, the direct communication of pre-determined ideas;

(c) the key role of the agent whose task is to accompany the process and support it accordingly (see 4.3.3);

(d) the importance of small economic/physical projects as a means of furthering group activities and encouraging participation.[4]

There is a great richness in project files on the pedagogy of participation but little as yet has been systematically analysed. There is also a great amount of improvisation, with commitment to a philosophy but little apparent coherent approach. Where we can understand a bit more is when we examine the instruments of the pedagogy. These straddle a broad and imaginative range and include:

(a) the group meeting which is held on a regular basis and which is the basic forum of the pedagogy of participation;[5]

(b) training sessions and study seminars which serve to develop the process of conscientisation;[6]

(c) the use of social drama to highlight a particular issue and provoke involvement in analysis and comment;[7]

(d) simulation or other such games based upon the analysis of a common issue.[8]

The pedagogy of participation is a highly individualistic experience which, whilst we can identify common elements and principles, is often so bound up with the individuals concerned that the sharing of the experience becomes difficult. A major task will be to devise a means to monitor appropriately the pedagogy in practice so that we can begin to put this experience to wider use.

4.3.2 Groups

Apart from the more common identification of health programmes, for example, with the rural community, there is an increasing awareness that the community or village, geographically expressed, is an

over-aggregate and needs to be broken down. In the past few years discrete socio-economic groups have become the targets of rural development intervention. In three of our case studies we noted the emphasis upon groups. Also the basis of FAO's new PPP strategy is organised groups of the rural poor. There is at this moment a lot of experimentation with groups in rural development projects, and this experience can be divided into two broad approaches:

(a) the use of the groups as a basis for economic "take-off" which will enhance the prospects of participation; and

(b) the use of the groups to build up an organisational form and collective solidarity as precursors to participating in economic development.

Neither approach is mutually exclusive and much of the practice contains elements of both of these approaches. Our review of this practice would suggest, however, that in each case one of the above approaches is dominant. Both approaches have the common aim of the greater "participation" of their members in rural development, but they differ in terms of the way in which they see the groups achieving this greater participation.

The argument for the use of groups in achieving the participation of the rural poor in development stems to some extent from the inability of previous institutional forms (i.e. co-operatives) to facilitate this participation. It also reflects the "changing paradigm" of development thinking and the realisation that development aimed at the "community" in general inevitably resulted in the benefits accruing to the better-off and more powerful sections of that community. There now appears to be a general consensus that if rural development is to reach those previously excluded sections of the rural population, it must be purposefully directed towards clearly identified and discrete groups within that excluded section.

Although the use of groups in extension method, for example, is no novelty in rural development, the present practice is radically different. Much of the more conventional use of groups reflects the influence of group dynamics and the North American method of rural extension. The current experimentation is a radical departure in that it uses groups as the dynamic focus of intervention and deliberately aims to strengthen a particular group in order that it might be in a position better to defend its interests vis-à-vis other

groups as well as more successfully compete in the access to resources. The intention is implicit in much of the current practice and certainly characterised the groups in the case studies we reviewed.

At this juncture it is not possible to offer any kind of formal definition of the kind of "group" to which we are referring. The literature on group dynamics can offer us a range of scientifically acceptable definitions, and these can help structure our knowledge. The practice with groups in terms of the context of this paper is still developing, and as yet no universally applicable format has emerged. However, if we review the practice to date, we can identify a number of critical issues in terms of the use of groups for rural development:

(a) Formation: the initiative in forming groups for participation in rural development is a critical issue which will determine the nature and course of the group's development. The issue is whether in fact that initiative comes from outside and is, in effect, imposed on the individuals involved. For meaningful participation the emphasis should be put on the emergence of the group structure as a result of pedagogic processes.

(b) Membership: the practice here is wide and varied, but does seem to be generally based on some concept of common economic interest as the basic criteria for group composition. The "rural poor" is too broad a category in this respect, and the level and nature of economic activity is a more accurate basis for membership. Both men and women are given equal membership. Groups are also small in size and the common practice is to limit their numbers to between 15-35 members.

(c) Structure: the group must achieve some form of internal structure in order to give it the organisational base from which to seek participation. Again the critical issue here is whether the structure is in fact imposed from outside or whether it develops as the group develops. To avoid the dependency which inevitably results from structures which are suggested or imposed, emphasis should be put on allowing the members to fashion the organisation that most suits their needs. In this respect also the issue of leadership is equally divergent. Conventional group strategy is still psychologically tied to the concept of the benevolent leader among his or her peers; a more radical alternative encourages the emergence of leadership as the group develops.

There is now a growing and rich project literature on the use of groups to bring about some form of participation, but we still lack a major research effort to analyse the experience to date. The process involved is complex and cannot be subsumed within a rural development project's other activities. The development of strong and economically viable groups represents a major opportunity to achieve meaningful participation for the rural poor, but their development must be deliberately encouraged. An idea of the processes involved is highlighted in the following diagramatic representation of the stages of group development:

Stages	Characteristics
Initial contact	Confidence Friendship
Intermediate stage	Group structuring Membership Solidarity Internal participation
Principal stage	Formalisation Organisation Collective deliberation Action

The above is not presented as a model but merely as an indication of the dimensions of group development. If we argue that the development and strengthening of groups is fundamental to the rural poor achieving some form of participation, we must be aware that, to be authentic and self-sustaining, the development of such groups must be a major task within any rural development project.

4.3.3 Agent of participation

In each of the case studies we noted that a critical role in the process of participation was assigned to the project agent. A variety of different names have been used for the agent. The WCARRD Declaration referred to animateurs; the SFDP and the PPP refer to group organisers, whilst in Latin America the more common term is agent. Whatever the name adopted, there is agreement that the process of group development and participation must include an agent to facilitate the process. Indeed it is argued that such an agent is vital to the success of the process. The use of grass-roots agents is, of course, not new in rural development; village

level and community development (CD) workers were (and still are) a dominant feature of much of the rural development of the 1950s and 1960s. In this respect it is pertinent to ask in what way agents of participation are different from the more traditional CD worker. The answer lies in the difference of the role of a CD worker as a harmoniser of interests at the community level, and his/her work with the community élites, whereas the agent is more concerned to stimulate deliberately the awareness and the development of disadvantaged groups.

We are, therefore, concerned with examining the role of the agent in the process of participation, which we define in terms of a process of empowering. The agent, almost inevitably, will not be from the group, and thus we confront the issue of the outsider. In this respect the literature on Bhoomi Sena is one of the few written examples available of the agent in this process. Other studies have listed functions of the agent, but these invariably refer to the more tangible activities and procedures of contact, information on group or assistance with setting up small projects. Indeed all this is usually expressed in such terms as "duties" or "tasks" and stress the bureaucratic nature of the agent's activities.[9] Such lists of "duties" would appear to reduce the agent to a general CD worker and they fail to stress the critical pedagogic role of the agent in assisting the group to acquire strength. There is no doubt that in a process of meaningful participation, the agent's role cannot be explained in terms of a list of "duties".

It would appear, therefore, that there are two different practices of the role of the agent in participation, and this difference has implications for skills and training:

(a) projects where the agent's role is primarily to facilitate the access of the group to resources for development; and

(b) projects where the agent's role is primarily to develop an appropriate pedagogy to stimulate awareness within the group and thus begin a process of the group seeking active participation in development.

Whilst the two roles do have some complementarity, they also involve different personal characteristics and skills. Ideally the two roles should demand two agents but, given the pressure on resources, the two roles are often incorporated into one. Both the ILO and the FAO are associated with projects in which these two roles are

combined.[10] With (a) we are talking in terms of an agent whose role is to facilitate the access of groups to government projects and resources: with (b) we are talking of an agent whose principal activity is to build up the strength and the organisational base of groups of the rural poor. In terms of the former role we note many similarities with the role of the old CD worker: with the latter, and particularly in the context of formal rural development projects, we are talking about a very different person.

Again, we come up against the problem that much of the experimentation with agents of participation in the latter sense is to be found only in project files and documentation. Little formal published material has explored this type of agent.[11] A detailed analysis of such files would be instructive. However, if we consider the agent's role in terms of the pedagogy of empowering, then there are a number of areas which would merit further examination:

(a) characteristics/selection: It could be argued that selection is critical in that unless an agent possesses certain necessary characteristics, he or she would be inappropriate to the work involved. If characteristics such as humility, commitment, sensitivity and self-confidence are attributes considered vital to most rural development workers it is difficult to see how such characteristics can be transmitted through training;

(b) skills: In terms of the processes involved, the agent needs the ability to communicate, both verbally and non-verbally, and also to analyse and diagnose the context of his work with the rural poor;

(c) training: It is impossible to avoid the conclusion that there can be no formal training as such. Case experience suggests that agents are best prepared for the work by learning by experience. Seminars and meetings help to structure the continual experience, but there exists no formal course for the training of such agents.

It would not be difficult to construct a list of "tasks" for agents of participation to undertake, a list of the supposed qualities such agents should possess or a hypothetical training course to equip them with the relevant skills. Such an exercise, however, would only contribute to the extensive documentation already available on those issues and would leave us none the wiser. There can be no doubt that the project agent is a critical element

in the process of participation and that the critical dimension is his role with the group in building up its organisational base, its internal solidarity and its potential actively to intervene in the development process. And yet we still know so little of the nature of this role, the content of its function, the areas of knowledge required for its performance and the ways in which it can be developed in agents. The manuals of the past are not useful in this situation and merely to transfer established techniques of CD work to the process of participation is to misunderstand the complexities of the process.

4.4 Evaluation

It is appropriate also in this chapter to consider the issue of the evaluation of rural development projects in terms of whether or not they result in the meaningful participation of the rural poor. In this sense we are not necessarily talking only of "participatory evaluation", although the approach implicit in that term will surely be relevant. We are more concerned with the means to be able to form a judgement upon whether a particular rural development project has resulted in participation, the nature of that participation and the magnitude of the achievement in terms of the resources employed. We are all rightly concerned to understand the "economic impact" of rural development projects and to measure that impact accordingly. It is equally important to be able to judge the impact of a project in terms of participation.

At this moment, however, we have very little material available to guide us on this crucial issue of the "evaluation" of participation.[12] Practically no research has been done on the question of judging the effect of rural development projects in terms of whether they do, or do not, result in participation. The difficulties are compounded by the complexities of "participation" and the inadequacies of conventional project evaluation techniques. In the context of the recently launched PPP programme of the FAO an initial study has considered this issue of evaluation, and presented us with a tentative framework for the monitoring and evaluation of the PPPs.[13] If we consider the complex problem of the evaluation of participation, two issues should be noted:

(a) in evaluating "participation" we are concerned with forming a judgement on processes which are qualitative and not results which are quantitative;

(b) the approach to such evaluation, therefore, is more concerned with description and interpretation than with measurement and prediction.

The main difficulty in this evaluation is how to give some kind of form to the process of participation. Unless the "participation" can be expressed in intelligible terms it will defy all efforts at judgement. Superficial efforts have confronted the issue by attempting to quantify and put a tangible measure on participation (i.e. how many members, frequency of attendance at meetings, etc.) but these dimensions do not adequately reflect a very complex process. It is true to say that adequate techniques have not yet been developed by which we could "measure" the element of participation in a rural development project. We have a better understanding, however, of the complexities involved, which suggest the following as the critical areas we need to understand:

(a) valid criteria for understanding the nature of the element of participation in a rural development project;

(b) a set of indicators which would give form to the above criteria and thus help to express "participation" in intelligible terms;

(c) appropriate methods at the project level, for monitoring the above indicators and maintaining a continuous record of the unfolding process of participation;

(d) the interpretation of the information recorded in terms of making a judgement concerning participation.[14]

The measurement of the non-material objectives of rural development projects presents us with formidable conceptual and analytical problems which we need to tackle if we really do wish to form a judgement on "participation". It is not enough merely to apply conventional evaluation techniques and to present participation in quantifiable terms; but we have a formidable task ahead if we wish to develop appropriate techniques for measuring the non-tangible nature of participation.

4.5 Project activities

Inevitably at some time during the process of participation some kind of economic activity will be undertaken by the group. We have seen already a divergence of practice in this respect. Either such activities are used as the means to creating assets and greater

economic strength in order to allow the group more effectively to participate in development, or such activities are used as the means to stimulate group involvement, solidarity and the development of the capacity of the group to take action. Whatever the ultimate purpose of the activities, they do play a central role in the process of participation.

It is not our intention to review the mechanics of such activities or to analyse their effects to date. We are more concerned here with understanding the basis upon which the activities are undertaken in such a way that they strengthen the process of participation. These economic activities should not be undertaken in a purely mechanical way but must be consciously related to the ultimate objective: the strengthening of the process of participation. If we review examples of the practice of such activities, therefore, we can suggest the following principles which should guide implementation.

(a) involvement: the group concerned must be involved in the basic aspects of project formulation, decision-making and implementation, and the whole operational base of the project must be organised with this principle in mind;

(b) minimise dependence: every effort must be made to minimise the dependence of the activity, either in material or human terms, on materials from outside, otherwise group autonomy will never be achieved;

(c) sustainability: the activity must be able to be sustained in the context of locally available resources. It must represent an initiative which can be taken up by the group itself and further developed. In other words, it must not be beyond the capabilities of the group;

(d) next step: similarly the activity must represent what technologically is the next step for the group, and not be a technological advance which is beyond the natural development of the group;

(e) effective as opposed to "efficient": it will be perhaps necessary in the short term to forego our slavish adherence to the economic principle of efficiency, and undertake economic activities which are an effective use of resources and can bring about some economic advance, although they may not represent the most efficient use of those resources.

Although the economic activities of participatory projects are not a central issue of this study, we were concerned to emphasise that the basis upon which such activities are undertaken is critical to the process of participation. We do not offer the above basis of operations as a model universally applicable. Experience would indicate, however, that if a central objective of the activity is, in one way or another, to develop the group's ability to participate, then thought and care must be given to the way in which the activity is undertaken. Project activities in the context of a process of participation cannot be undertaken in a purely mechanical way.

4.6 Comment

In this chapter we have tried to put a little substance into what appears to be an emerging strategy based on an extremely fragmented practice and experience. In the past five years or so various statements have been made on the overall nature of a strategy for participation.[15] We have also seen the concern with participation reach into the areas of research and evaluation. "Participatory research" and "participatory evaluation" reflect the emergence of this new strategy and they are key activities within the process of participation. There is now a growing literature on both of these issues in conceptual terms.[16] There is indeed sufficient evidence of a widespread practice of some kind of strategy of participation to be able to affirm that the search for such a strategy is seriously afoot. In relation to the quite considerable practice, however, our recorded knowledge is very limited and not readily accessible. It is time to mount an exercise to pull the varied practices together and to understand better the implicit strategy. In this chapter we have merely presented the framework of a strategy for effective participation. Much of our framework demands further inquiry and substantiation, but we believe that the practice to date is sufficient for us to argue that the framework is valid.

One conclusion, however, is that if we do associate the concept of participation with some idea of power (whichever way this power is expressed), we really do have to think of a radically different concept of project practice. The dominant paradigm of experts generating proposals and the rural poor passively acquiescing in one way or another, must be broken and replaced by entirely different actors. The priorities become the building up and the strengthening of people, an approach which demands radically different project agents, as opposed to the too familiar emphasis upon

tangible activities. To speak of seeking to achieve meaningful participation without considering a fundamental shift in the nature of practice is quite meaningless. But that is the implication of a strategy of participation.

Notes:

[1] Whilst the literature on this experimentation is still largely non-conventional and we have few substantial texts, a number of them indicate the main parameters of this experimentation and the terms employed. Md. A. Rahman: "Concept of an Inquiry", in Development: Seeds of change (op. cit.); Xavier Institute: Development from below (Ranchi, Institute of Social Service, 1980); W. Fernandes (ed.): People's participation in development (Indian Social Institute, 1981); K. Constantino-David: "Issues in community organisation" in Community Development Journal (Oxford), 1982, No. 3.

[2] The material for four of these examples is drawn from unpublished project files and other documentation. The examples from the Philippines and Sri Lanka are taken from Md. A. Rahman (ed.): Grass-roots participation and self-reliance: Experiences in south-east Asia and the Pacific (forthcoming).

[3] Probably the most complete study of the pedagogy of participation undertaken to date is the one published by the Centre for International Education based upon a case study in Ecuador. The three principal texts in this series are: A.W. Etting: Characteristics of facilitators: The Ecuador project and beyond; J. Hoxeng: Let Jorge do it: An approach to rural non-formal education; and W.A. Smith: The meaning of conscientizacão: The goal of Paulo Freire's pedagogy. All are published by the Centre for International Education, University of Massachusetts.

[4] P. Oakley and D. Winder: "The concept and practice of rural social development: Current trends in Latin America and India, in Manchester papers on development (op. cit.).

[5] The meeting of the group is the critical forum for its development. And yet the group does not necessarily develop on the lines of conventional group dynamics practice. One outsider, who experiences a series of group meetings in one project area, commented:

> In these meetings there is no co-ordination, no leadership, no agenda, no timetable. It is a meeting which begins without beginning, and ends without ending. A strange meeting. If there was somebody present trained in group dynamics, his mind would be confused. The meeting is seen, lived and felt as the supreme event of the community. What is decided in a group meeting can only be changed or corrected in a meeting.

(Quoted in Oakley and Winder, op. cit.).

[6] See, for example, K. Bhasin: Breaking barriers: A south Asian experience of training for participatory development (Bangkok, FAO, 1979).

[7] A comprehensive example of the growing literature in this field is P. Lambert: "Popular theatre: One road to a self-determined action", in Community Development Journal, 1982, No. 3.

[8] Hoxeng, op. cit.

[9] G. Huizer: Preliminary guidelines for participatory monitoring and on-going evaluation of PPP, draft manuscript (Rome, FAO), p. 24: FAO: People's participation in rural development through the promotion of self-help organizations (Rome, n.d.).

[10] Huizer, op. cit. The main duties of the agent are:

(a) to assist the agency responsible for the project in surveying the socio-economic structure of selected villages;

(b) to initiate and assist the villagers in forming small informal self-help groups;

(c) to assist the small groups in planning (determining the objectives, identifying constraints and selecting the means), income-generating activities, improvements in food production and processing and for improved social and economic infrastructure (participatory action research);

(d) to assist the small groups implement the activities they have decided to carry out;

(e) continuously to motivate the groups for self-help actions, whenever such action can lead to the solution of a problem, and stimulate self-determination;

(f) to arrange for and participate in the training of group members;

(g) to act as intermediary between the groups and the supporting agency;

(h) to assist the groups to develop into well-functioning receiving mechanism for the government extension service and enlist the support of the latter.

The ILO study refers to the SARILAKAS project in the Philippines.

[11] See, for example, Bhasin, op. cit.; F. O'Gorman: Conscientization, whose initiative should it be? (Rio de Janeiro, FASE, 1980); Etting, op. cit.; G.V.S. de Silva: "Bhoomi Sena: A struggle for people's power", in Development dialogue (1979, No. 2, pp. 3-70; B. Blair: The training of development agents (Reading University, unpublished dissertation, 1979).

[12] Probably the first substantial examination of the issue of the non-material objectives of rural development projects can be found in W. Haque et al.: "Towards a theory of rural development", in Development dialogue (1977, No. 2, pp. 113-137).

[13] Huizer, op. cit.

[14] P. Oakley: "Evaluating social development: How much of how good?" in Reading Rural Development Communications Bulletin (University of Reading), 1982, No. 14, pp. 12-18.

[15] Two of the more substantial examples of this literature are W. Haque et al.: "Towards a theory of rural development", op. cit. and B. Galjart: "Counterdevelopment: A position paper", in Community Development Journal (Oxford), 1981, No. 2.

[16] See, for example, W. Fernandes and R. Tandon (eds.): Participatory research and evaluation (New Delhi, Indian Social Institute, 1981). Also Md. A. Rahman: "The theory and practice of participatory action research" and B.L. Hall: "Participatory research popular knowledge and power" in IFDA Dossier (Nyon, International Foundation for Development Alternatives), Sep.-Oct. 1982; B. Knotts: Participatory evaluation: An educational process for social development action (Reading University, unpublished dissertion, 1979).

Chapter 5

CONCLUDING STATEMENT

The foregoing chapters have attempted to examine the ways in which participation has been viewed and relate this examination to a range of examples which illustrate the many dimensions which have been labelled "participatory". As indicated in the first chapter, with the decreased certainty attached to the direction of development, established explanations and modes of intervention no longer appear adequate. Attempts to deal with the many intransigent development problems have focused on such characteristics as poverty and unemployment, but have largely failed to come to terms with the human agents associated with the causes of such problems.

It is a two-sided struggle. On the one side it is a struggle to secure basic needs and worth while employment for those who are denied them and to provide value to existence and viable explanations for processes over which people feel they have little control. On the other side it is a struggle to avoid co-option and control by forces which imply rigidity and decreased creativity and flexibility, because they commit people to narrower, more dogmatic and often more oppressive forms of standardisation. There is a constant tension between these centrifugal and centripetal tendencies, encountered at all levels; from the "struggle" within the household between women and men in the context of the former's attempts to emerge from a veil of ignorance and neglect, to relationships between nations. Such a process implies a constant questioning of the often taken-for-granted world.

In this struggle "participation" occupies an uneasy space.[1] As the nature of the struggle changes, so do the forms which participation takes. It is thus perhaps counterproductive to attempt the accumulation of composite lists and guide-lines because this merely perpetuates particular forms.[2] "Participation" therefore must be viewed as a normative concept whose meaning changes with the changing explanations of social processes.

A great mass of material has been produced which attempts to formalise participation and to provide prescriptions for its successful implementation. There seems to be general agreement that participation is essential for development. (Some would argue that development in fact is participation). From this assumption

arises questions about its operationalisation, on the grounds that more of it is bound to be beneficial. But can participation be perceived as if it were an ingredient to be injected into a target group? Can participation ever be institutionalised or legislated for? Obviously public commitments to its promotion and extension can be made but this does not guarantee its implementation. In the final analysis participation remains illusive. Much of what has been written is inconclusive and so general and conditional as to be unconnected with processes in the real world; either a public rhetoric which disguises an often harsh and unequal reality or so abstract as to be of little value in the search for a way forward. We cannot just proclaim participation, we must be equally concerned with its authentic implementation.

In this context a typology of levels of participation might be devised ranging from forms of intervention at the bottom which, while perhaps called "participatory", could be seen as manipulatory or as therapeutic. Mass mobilisation campaigns might be seen in this category. In the middle levels are token forms of participation associated with the extension of information, consultation and collaboration of one sort or another. At the upper levels are partnerships, delegated power and citizen control, which are regarded as "real" forms of participation.[3] Such a typology involves the investigation of obstacles to "participation" at all levels and different tools will be used at each level. This begs the question of whether these levels are mutually exclusive or not and whether people interested in pursuing the issue of participation are really thinking in terms of shared control.

We have touched in this paper upon the issue of obstacles and problems to participation but have eschewed the presentation of "lists" of such obstacles. Such lists assume that once the obstacles have been correctly identified they can be more easily removed. There is no dearth of literature which focuses on structural features of inequality as explanations for a lack of authentic participation. These are enshrined in United Nations resolutions of many sorts which call for "radical structural change". The obstacles then are located in the present structural conditions which entrench the vested interests of those already holding assets and power and who are able to operate in the name of the state or the nation. These, obviously, are likely to be the ones who are the major resisters of "radical structural change".

What if the questions that we ask and the obstacles that we thereby identify are wrong? Competing explanations of poverty in the rural areas, on the one hand, isolate the individual and traditional values as the major obstacles; while on the other hand the "system" is isolated as the major obstacle, in which individuals are subjected to unequal and oppressive forms of inter-relationships. According to which explanation one accepts will depend the nature of the policy prescription offered and the attendant programme or project elaborated. The identification of the obstacles thus depends on the evaluative tools employed, which are inevitably conditioned by the perspective that the evaluation employs. Like participation, evaluation can thus never be considered neutral. If it is in the interests of some, it is against the interests of others.

Changing the accepted framework within which problems are perceived may do more than any other act to affect our future understanding of participation. We reviewed in Chapter 1 the changing analysis of the causes of underdevelopment and we have suggested throughout the need to look at participation in a radically different perspective. The implication is not to abandon the existing patterns of intervention, but rather to search for more appropriate ways in which a participatory approach underlies the whole basis of the intervention. This means a sensitisation of those involved in the organisation and administration of rural development projects and an increased flexibility in the ways in which job specifications are given and expertise is trained and recruited. These issues we have explored as a first step in Chapter 4.

We are in fact searching for a meaningful participatory strategy and, to be successful, it must be conducted outside the confines of rigid bureaucratic structures. It is a search which is trying to relate to the rural poor who continue marginalised from the mainstream of development. This search implies the occupation and the expansion of a "space" in which the rural poor have an opportunity to gain something. The search is identified with an ever-strengthening counter-debate which is examining ways in which the rural poor might achieve some effective voice. The lead in this search is being given by agencies outside formalised government structures, such as the World Council of Churches and the major voluntary agencies.[4] The United Nations agencies are

similarly concerned with the search and, where possible, give it active support. We have examined the conceptual basis of this search in Chapter 1, and further examined it with particular reference to participation in the other chapters. This counter-debate suggests a more radical meaning to participation which has implications for the whole way in which rural development projects are conceived and implemented.

Whilst we would accept that some rural people have participated in the benefits of rural development projects, the overwhelming majority have not. For them, therefore, participation is not in the first instance concerned with such benefits, but more with achieving some kind of base from which to challenge for these benefits. We have already seen a number of different terms used to explain this preparation of a base - "empowering", "creating space", "creating assets" - and we have examined in Chapter 4 the emerging strategy which is seeking to achieve this aim. We are left in no doubt that meaningful participation is concerned with achieving power: that is the power to influence the decisions that affect one's livelihood.

The struggle to gain increased participation is to enhance the rights of the excluded and confront the bases of established privilege. This has as many forms as there are relationships. In one sense it might be suggested that the forms which gain priority are those which can be pursued at the margins and/or in areas where there is no directly perceived threat to established power interests. Perhaps it is in these areas that planned intervention has been most successful. Thus, it could be argued that successful land reform programmes are only successful when land is no longer seen as the main basis from which to derive power. Similarly "women's programmes" are invariably judged on the basis of their ability to generate income and create additional assets; a more meaningful judgement on their effectiveness in terms of participation should be whether or not they achieve access for women to existing assets. On the other hand more hopefully these "marginal" forms do contain the seeds of change and the possibilities to nurture challenges and effective organisations which will seek participation from the existing inequitable order.

There would appear to be a widespread commitment to participation as a process of empowering, although this commitment takes a variety of forms and uses different terminologies. We are seeking

to create countervailing power to challenge the orthodoxies of the past and the structures which they perpetuated. Inevitably the process of empowering is interpreted as a challenge, and its practice straddles the uneasy ground between legitimacy and opposition. We cannot conceal the fact that the practice of empowering challenges established interests and seeks to confront those forces which oppose the rural poor's access to the means of development. Established bureaucracies do not charitably concede participation. This participation must result from the inexorable processes from below.

We conclude by commenting upon the implications of the content of our paper for the United Nations agencies. Our brief did not include any detailed study of the agencies and thus our comments must be seen in that light. It is neither our brief to tell the agencies what they should do in terms of their support for rural development projects. We have examined in this paper a concept which the agencies have done much to promote. A substantial part of the formal literature on participation has been sponsored by the United Nations, and indeed the research continues. The WCARRD Declaration formally committed the United Nations and member Governments to a strategy for rural development based upon the active participation of the rural population. Our examination of some of the practice to date inevitably highlights the relationship of the United Nations agencies with the nature of this practice.

It would have been wrong to have written an inconclusive paper and merely to have examined the concept of participation in an impassive manner. Despite the undoubted share in the benefits of rural development projects which have accrued to the few, we cannot agree that such sharing contributes to meaningful participation. We conclude that the meaningful participation of the rural poor in development is concerned with <u>direct access</u> to the resources necessary for development and <u>some active involvement</u> and <u>influence</u> in the decisions affecting those resources. To participate meaningfully implies the ability positively to influence the course of events. This interpretation is implicit in the strategy which we explained in Chapter 4. It is also a fact that the development of this strategy is, at this moment, shared with the NGOs, and that formalised bureaucracies if anything resist its implementation.

Where, therefore, do the United Nations agencies stand in relation to participation as a process of empowering? We are loathe

to answer this question from a position of ignorance on the workings of the United Nations structure. We will limit ourselves to a few brief points:

(a) although much of the United Nations literature conceptualises participation, in one way or another, in terms of empowering and the United Nations supports research efforts in this context, the practice is somewhat different. There is a gulf between the practice of meaningful participation and the United Nations' involvement in rural development;

(b) participation as empowering inevitably challenges existing bureaucratic structures. The United Nations agencies are obliged to work within these existing structures and "participation" is conceded on pre-established terms. These structures are in fact the basic obstacles to meaningful participation;

(c) rural development in general, and participation in particular, are not government prerogatives. NGOs constitute legitimate alternatives and appropriate vehicles for achieving the participation of the rural poor. But what level of support can the United Nations agencies give to the NGO activities?

We can conclude this study by suggesting t major avenues of inquiry which, in our opinion, will help us to take the next step in terms of our understanding and use of participation. We would argue that "participation" has been adequately conceptualised in the literature to provide us with sufficient working knowledge of its many dimensions. We further believe that there is a widespread enough practice of some form of participation in rural development, both within formal government structures and within the NGOs, for substantial evidence to exist upon the nature and effect of these participatory programmes and projects. We would suggest, therefore, that the next step should include two major areas of further action:

(a) a thorough and systematic documentation and description of the practice of participation, based on rural development projects sponsored by both government and non-government agencies. Such a systematic study would help us better to understand the method of participation and thus how best to promote participation in such projects;

(b) a major effort to tackle the difficult problem of the monitoring and evaluation of "participation". Conventional techniques of project appraisal and evaluation are inadequate for the qualitative process of participation, and we still lack a rigorous methodology for monitoring and evaluating participation. We will be better able to promote participation if we can better understand its development within the context of a rural development project.

To do nothing is to perpetuate a state of affairs which most reasonable people consider to be unacceptable. But a commitment to seek the meaningful participation of the rural poor in development will be successful only if established orthodoxies are challenged and the paradigm well and truly shifted.

Notes:

[1] The use of the term "space" in this context reflects the way in which the term is used in the UNRISD inquiry into participation.

[2] It could be argued that Chapter 4 in fact constitutes such a composite list and set of guide-lines. The point we wish to make here is that rigid adherence to such lists and guide-lines overlooks the dynamic nature of participation, a process which cannot be encapsulated indefinitely within prescribed boundaries.

[3] The idea of levels of participation is derived from S.R. Arnstein: "A ladder of citizen participation" in American Institute of Planners' Journal, July 1969.

[4] See, for example, Commission on the Churches Participation in Development: People's participation and people's movements (Geneva, WCC, 1981).