

# Notes on Participatory Development

## Introduction

Participation, as an approach to development, began in the first instance, as an approach intended to subvert development orthodoxy (Richards, 1995). It is not as modern a concept as most people think, having first appeared in the development literature in the 1950s. This, and later developments of participation, were the logical direction to take with respect to so many failed, wasted and damaging top-down projects and programmes. Participation became known as being synonymous with democracy, equity and popular success.

More recently, participation has been formalised into a development approach, which, for the purpose of this paper, is called Participatory Appraisal (PA) (other names can be seen in Table 1). PA was first named in a Rapid Rural Appraisal workshop, held in the Institute of Development Studies at Sussex in 1980, where the concept and name were introduced to address the problems associated with RRA (see Chambers, 1994).

Table 1. The Range of Participatory Approaches

Acronym	Description
AEA	Agroecosystem Analysis
BA	Beneficiary Assessment
DELTA	Development Education Leadership Teams
D&D	Diagnosis and Design
DRP	Diagnostico Rural Participativo
FPR	Farmer Participatory Research
FSR	Farming Systems Research
GT	Gestion de Terroirs
GRAAP	Groupe de Recherche et d'Appui pour l'Auto-promotion Paysanne
MARP	Méthode Accéléré de Recherche Participative
OOPP	Objectives Oriented Project Planning
PA	Participatory Appraisal
PALM	Participatory Analysis and Learning Methods
PAR	Participatory Action Research
PD	Process Documentation
PRA	Participatory Rural Appraisal
PRAP	Participatory Rural Appraisal and Planning
PRM	Participatory Research Methods
PTD	Participatory Technology Development
RAAKS	Rapid Assessment of Agricultural Knowledge Systems
SB	Samuhik Brahman (Joint Trek)
TFD	Theatre for Development
TFT	Training for Transformation

Source: adapted from Cornwall, Guijt and Welbourn, 1993.

Participation has now been wholly taken on board by a plethora of development institutions. Possibly, the most important step for participatory approaches to development in Africa (and whose definition is adhered to in this paper) came in 1990 with an international conference in Arusha. Here, the African Charter for Popular Participation in Development and Transformation<sup>1</sup> (Arusha, 1990) stated that:

*“Popular participation is, in essence, the empowerment of the people to effectively involve themselves in creating the structures and in designing policies and programmes that serve the interests of all as well as to effectively contribute to the development process and share equitably in its benefits”.*

Participation has now come a long way from its early roots, it now has a history. While its rapid evolution and uptake have created many success stories and ‘participatory models of good practice’, there has also been a host of problems and contradictions. This paper examines the theory of participation, its uses, problems and contradictions, some success stories and concludes with a statement over ways forward.

### **The Politics of Participation**

In order to understand PA approaches to development it is necessary to examine the role that participation plays at all levels and its function therein. Rahnema (1996) says participation has four functions:

1. **Cognitive:** Participation is aimed at finding new knowledge systems and creating a new role and image for development. Development, as conceived and designed by expatriate professionals using western scientific knowledge systems, is often inappropriate. Local Knowledge Systems (LKS) have often been ignored or rejected.
2. **Political:** Participation’s objective is to legitimise development as an avenue for helping the poor, empowering the powerless and thereby leading to equitable societies.
3. **Instrumental:** Quite simply participation is meant to ‘make things (projects) work’ by providing new avenues and techniques.
4. **Social:** Participation has given development discourse a new legitimacy and lease of life. In popular terms it has given encouragement to a flagging industry. Participation was the approach to bring development to the many and fulfil basic needs.

Participation lends a completely different perspective to the traditional development approach. It is a challenge and an affront to traditional, top-down, bureaucracy-led, development. Although there has been widespread adoption of participation in many aspects of development by a wide range of actors (dominated by NGOs and academic institutions), it is still, fundamentally, a threat to many existing organisations. For such organisations, the concept of empowerment of individuals and communities in order that they can prioritise, implement and solve their own problems, in addition to challenging to wider political causes of such problems is unconceivable. If this is true then the question should be asked, why then has there been, in the last few years, an unprecedented call for participatory practice by government and development institutions. Rahnema (1996) again gives six reasons.

1. Participation, as a concept, is seen as a necessary requirement. Governments and institutions interested in greater productivity at low cost are increasingly in need of 'participation' for their own purposes. They have also learnt to control the risks in possible unruly abuses of participation.
2. Participation has become a politically attractive slogan: important political advantages are obtained through the overt display of participatory intentions. Participatory slogans create feelings of collusion between the public manufacturers of the participatory illusion and their consumers.
3. Participation has become, economically, an appealing proposition. Because of small government funds, especially those devoted to rural development, participation is the low cost option. Some, cynically, see this as passing on government costs to the poor.
4. Participation is perceived as an instrument for greater effectiveness as well as a new source of investment. Participatory Approaches bring: a close knowledge of the 'field reality' which foreign techniques and government bureaucrats do not have; networks on relations, essential both to the success of on-going projects and long term investments in rural areas; the co-operation, on the local scene, of organisations able to carry out development activities. In this context, grassroots organisations are becoming the infrastructure through which investment is made.
5. Participation is becoming a good fund raising device. In the last ten years development-oriented NGOs have become very much 'in vogue'. This is due to the reputation of NGOs and their participatory and less bureaucratised approaches allow them to meet the needs of the people with greater efficiency and at less cost.
6. An expanded concept of participation could help the private sector to be directly involved in the development business: private corporations and consulting agencies associated with development have been (successfully) lobbying for the privatisation of development, arguing that governments and international aid agencies waste taxpayers money.

For governments and development organisations then, the benefits of participation outweigh the costs. However, as a result of this reasoning, participation has come to be 'disembedded' from the socio-cultural roots which have always kept it alive (Rahnema, 1996). It is now simply perceived as one of the many 'resources' needed to keep the economy alive (ibid.).

### **Understanding Empowerment**

Central to the idea and practice of participation is the notion of empowerment. In order to understand empowerment it is necessary to examine the concept of power. Nelson and Wright (1995) divide power in relation to participatory development into two components: power to and power over.

'Power to' relates to the process where both parties (beneficiary and external project) question the realities with which they started and both transform their understanding (Nelson and Wright, 1995). As a result of this interaction, the objective is to discover 'more spaces of control' (Giddens, 1984) where, although never powerless to start with, by developing confidence and

changing attitudes and behaviours, they can alter the power differentials in their relationships (ibid.). This happens on three levels. First, differentials are altered on a personal level, where the individual develops their own self-confidence for action and associated abilities. Secondly, is the ability to speak for themselves (or their group) to negotiate and make or change relationships. Thirdly, is the ability to operationalise the realisation that group action is often more effective or 'powerful' than isolated action.

'Power over' is about gaining political power, outside the individual, and power over access to decision-making resources and machinery. In a Friarian sense, this is the process whereby marginalised groups (women, youths, the poorest of the poor) gain access to decision making institutions, such as either departmental or national sub-ministries, and the resources held therein. The challenge is for the marginalised group to receive treatment as equal partners in such institutions, so they have long term access to resources and decision making (Nelson and Wright, 1995). This form of empowerment is arguably the ultimate objective of a participatory project and can be seen in the 'self-mobilisation' category of participatory projects in Box 1. The evolution of limited power, to 'power to', to 'power over' is the process which participation allows; empowerment to local people allowing them power over the resources which affect them or restrict their development.

### **Box 1. A Typology of Participation**

#### **1. Passive participation**

People participate by being told what is going to happen or has already happened. It is a unilateral announcement by an administration or project management without listening to people's responses. The information being shared belongs only to external professionals.

#### **2. Participation in information giving**

People participate by answering questions posed by extractive researchers using questionnaire surveys or similar approaches. People do not have the opportunity to influence proceedings, as the findings of the research are neither shared nor checked for accuracy.

#### **3. Participation by consultation**

People participate by being consulted, and external people listen to views. These external professionals define both problems and solutions, and may modify these in the light of people's responses. Such a consultative process does not concede any share in decision making, and professionals are under no obligation to take on board people's views.

#### **4. Participation for material incentives**

People participate by providing resources, for example labour, in return for food, cash or other material incentives. Much on-farm research falls in this category, as farmers provide the fields but are not involved in the experimentation or the process of learning. It is very common to see this called participation, yet people have no stake in prolonging activities when the incentives end.

#### **5. Functional participation**

People participate by forming groups to meet predetermined objectives related to the project, which can involve the development or promotion of externally initiated social organisation. Such involvement does not tend to be at early of project cycle or planning, but rather after major decisions have been made. These institutions tend to be dependent on external initiators and facilitators, but may become self-dependent.

#### **6. Interactive participation**

People participate in joint analysis, which leads to action plans and the formation of new local institutions or the strengthening of existing ones. It tends to involve interdisciplinary methodologies that seek multiple perspectives and make use of systematic and structured learning processes. These groups take control over local decisions, and so people have a stake in maintaining structures or practices.

#### **7. Self-mobilisation**

People participate by taking initiatives independent of external institutions to change systems. They develop contacts with external institutions for resources and technical advice they need, but retain control over how resources are used. Such self-initiated mobilisation and collective action may or may not challenge existing inequitable distributions of wealth and power.

Source: Pretty, 1994.

The challenge to participatory practice lies in the reality of the power relationships in any society, which manifest themselves in the organisational structures present. The challenge occurs when the political environment of previously accepted service delivery meets demands for the participation of those previously excluded from the decision making process. It involves and requires ideological development, and fundamental changes, both at the institutional and at the community level.

### **The Context of Participatory Approaches**

Using participatory approaches does not guarantee that everyone get a say. Thus, there needs to be recognition by people using PA of the existing power structures in existence, not only in local communities. This is not to say that PA will reinforce the status quo, in some situations it may, in others it may not. What is important however, is to recognise that there are existing power structures where PA will be located. This allows space for negotiation.

There are also those that believe that participation may have led to a replacement of indigenous power structures. Projects using PA may have contributed to a dis-valuing of the traditional and vernacular forms of power (Rahnema, 1996). This danger may exist in some situations, depending on the authority of those introducing PA and local contexts. There are however the presence of informal resistance networks that have been written about extensively (Scott, 1976, Hyden, 1989, Rahnema, 1996) that act as a buffer against external threats and act to preserve existing, valid, structures.

### **The Use of Participation**

There are a range of techniques that have either a full or part component of participation. Some are designed for research but most are aimed at the 'action-oriented' aspect of research and so are used for project identification, planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation.

PA was developed as the first research method that was led by the beneficiary group, and not by the outside agency. PA has several major characteristics (Scoones, 1995):

- the processes of participatory research are slow and difficult;

- the techniques of PA are complex and require many other skills, especially of communication, facilitation and negotiation;
- wider issues of organisational change, management systems, ethics and responsibilities also need to be addressed when using PA;
- PA is based on an action-research approach, in which theory and practice are constantly challenged through experience, reflection and learning.

Rapid Rural Appraisal (RRA) is not a participatory appraisal technique (see Chambers, 1994: 98). RRA is a research technique that was developed from northern academic institutions and development organisations as a tool to facilitate the data gathering process for research and evaluation purposes. Its objective was to counter the ‘road-side bias’ and development tourism of previous activities. PA techniques have largely originated from direct multidisciplinary field experience in southern project and programme activities where the objectives have been implementation and monitoring and evaluation.

PA used in a rapid manner remains an extractive process, the difference here being that feelings are being extracted in addition to physical attributes. PA are not rapid, they are slow and time consuming exercises. The importance of time is highlighted by Roche (1994:165), who says “being there and remaining there, even if no ‘activities’ are possible is important, for reasons which include moral support, playing a witness role, providing a symbolic presence, and enabling programme staff to reassess what role they can play and what new opportunities they might take”. Rapid PA are more of a danger to development work than RRA, at least RRA admitted its faults. Table 2 below clarifies the distinct differences between RRA and PA in terms of development, implementation and results:

**Table 2. RRA and PA Compared**

	RRA	PA
Period of major development	Late 1970s, 1980s	Late 1980s, 1990s
Major innovators based in	Universities	NGOs
Main users	Aid agencies, Universities	NGOs, Government field organisations
Key resource earlier overlooked	Local knowledge	Local people’s capabilities
Main innovation	Methods	Behaviour
Dominant mode	Extractive	Participatory
Ideal objectives	Learning by outsiders	Empowerment of local people
Longer term outcomes	Plans, projects, publications	Sustainable local action and institutions

Source: Chambers, 1994

Despite the difficulty in using PA techniques, they are necessary because, as Richards, (1995:14), points out “understanding the dilemmas of the rural poor is extremely difficult because they lead extremely complex lives”.

Ultimately, the goal is to try to understand local realities in local terms (Cornwall and Fleming, 1995:9). Richards, (1995:15), highlights the danger of not doing this,

*“Put explicitly, what kind of muddle are we in if one set of participants - the organisers, holds the view that the farm calendar being plotted on the flip chart is a template for agricultural action, and the other group - the rural poor (sic) - sees it as an outcome of what they do?”*

Because of the complexity of local realities and in attempting to overcome problems, such as the one highlighted by Richards, there has been debate on the relationships between anthropology and PA. Scoones, (1995), says PA needs anthropology (and ethnography) to continue the process of reflection, self-critique and theoretical and methodological enrichment. These combined aspects are needed to understand the context of the local realities and especially in relation to distinct cultural identities.

There are valuable lessons that participatory appraisal can learn from anthropology. As mentioned before PA tends to be a long process, not just because of the PA methods that are used, but also for the PA user to develop a relationship with the communities where s/he works. Hyden (1980:6) points out, there are “serious limitations inherent in research exercises where the investigator fails to become part of the social environment that he examines”. To become involved in the communities is important because:

*“Involvement in the community we study may be the precondition for a critical understanding of the structures and processes we try to elucidate through our research”.* (Hyden 1980:6)

This is not to imply that the PA user should live with those communities for years. However, the PA user should be willing to spend prolonged periods with those communities in order to understand local priorities. The following case study highlights why this is important.

### **Case study: Agroforestry and Participatory Appraisal in Burkina Faso**

In 1993, ADESSI, a Burkinabè NGO, received funding from *Reseau Afrique 2000* (a programme of the UNDP) for two years for an agroforestry programme. The first phase of the agroforestry project (*Projet Agroforestier*) had a non-participatory approach. The objectives of the project were:

1. the protection of the local environment and ecosystem;
2. the training of villagers in soil management;
3. soil improvement and nitrogen fixation;
4. soil and water conservation;
5. the improvement of the socio-economic conditions of the local population;
6. educational exchanges/interaction between different villages and areas.

To achieve these objectives, ADESSI attempted to create three departmental village nurseries. At the time of implementation, ADESSI worked through the local Ministry of Environment and Tourism (*le Service Provincial de l'Environnement et du Tourisme* (SPET)) based in the provincial capital, Léo.

This relationship proved problematic because of insufficient supervision of the hired technical staff of SPET from members of ADESSI stationed in Ouagadougou and an uncertainty of the hired staff of the project goals. ADESSI also proved to be over-ambitious with the nurseries' production levels of 100,000 tree seedlings per season. It has been demonstrated by a wealth of examples that centralised, large-scale nurseries, aiming to be supply centres for the surrounding areas, rarely work because of a lack of involvement of the local people. At the end of the first two years of the project, less than one percent of the total seedling production in all the nurseries were planted and it is unsure if those planted survived the first season. The nurseries failed because:

- they were 'top-down' decisions, few discussions with the village groups had been undertaken and the villagers were 'told' what to do;
- nursery workers were employed and paid by ADESSI so there was little involvement by the village groups in nursery activities;
- lack of access to the villages and lack of perceived need by the departmental population meant that the nurseries failed to supply the departmental population with tree seedlings;
- in two of the villages the nurseries exacerbated village conflicts between two opposing cantons because it was not clear who 'owned' (i.e. had responsibility) for the nurseries;
- after the nursery workers contracts had finished, the nurseries went into disrepair;
- in two of the villages the communal nursery materials were used for private use and consequently caused additional conflicts.

In 1993, a second phase was initiated through funding from Diakonia (a Swedish donor) to attempt at the rehabilitation of the three nurseries. It was decided after three months of attempting their rehabilitation that only one of the nurseries could be continued, and this should take the form of a '*jardin polyvalent*' (a mixed garden with vegetables, fruit trees and a tree nursery).

Together with the members of ADESSI, the aims, approaches and objectives of their agroforestry programme were rethought and reworked. The result was a village tree nursery programme that would be based around a needs assessment exercise with a participatory approach to agroforestry development. After exploratory participatory appraisals with village groups in Sissili, the objectives of the second phase of ADESSI's agroforestry programme included:

- to increase agricultural production through the integration of agroforestry techniques in the local farming systems;
- to improve the nutritional status of local communities (especially women and children) through fruit and vegetable production through dry season gardens;
- to take the pressure off local forest resources through the management of planted woodlots for fuelwood, medicine, building poles and food;

- to create self-sustaining village tree nurseries to provide local communities with access to tree seedlings and as an income generating activity;
- to heighten the awareness of local communities of environmental issues in their own local production systems.

Employing a participatory approach allowed local groups to articulate their needs, wants, problems and proposed solutions. Throughout this participatory process, it became clear that there were different groups involved, different stakeholders. These included women's groups, men's groups and youth groups who all had different interests. It also became apparent that there were differences between ethnic groups; one pastoralist group were interested in trees for cattle fodder, one sedentary group were interested in compost pits, and another group wanted fruit trees. The participatory approach was also very important to determine organisation and project management, on areas such as nursery management, management of revenue, supervision and upkeep of the trees and soil and water conservation structures.

This diverse social and ethnic background offered a range of different issues and it was clear that project success involved more than improved technologies. The social process of negotiation, discussion and conflict resolution was central to the success of the work in the villages. It became clear that, in order to understand local production strategies there had to be an understanding of local social and cultural systems. Understanding of local social systems was achieved through a process of participatory appraisal and intense and prolonged dialogue between the extension workers and the local communities.

There was a range of project activities that were implemented with the village groups over the two year period. These included: approximately 60,000 trees planted; 13 village nurseries set-up; approximately 5 km of windbreaks planted; 10 wells dug; 5 dry season gardens put under cultivation; approximately 10 km of erosion control bunds constructed; 100 compost pits dug; 15 communal orchards planted; 13 group 'running funds' set-up (village group funds); 13 village demonstration farms operationalised; and a number of natural, organic pesticides introduced.

### **Participatory Approaches in Action**

Participatory development approaches take many forms, and are not simply limited to listening to what farmers have to say. Obviously there is a role for each different approach, from more effectively eliciting farmers' knowledge to putting across theory to policy makers, to implementing participatory training programmes for extension workers. Some participatory programmes have a wider ranging impact than others.

Chambers (1994) identifies three different scales of PA to development, which although once seen as contradictory, need not be. The first of these scales is called the safe and secure participatory model, where the professional works intensely with one or a small group of communities. This level of work is likely

to achieve very good results and be highly participatory. The second scale involves working with one or a range of organisations on a departmental level, attempting to change the organisation(s) structure so it becomes increasingly participatory. PA should influence the institution's growth and direction although this approach entails much, often frustrating, work as the PA is rejected or resisted by rigid bureaucracies. The third scale is working inside national or regional organisations to attempt a broader spread of PA. Here, as Chambers points out, there will be trade-offs. It will be risky and critics will abound but it is nevertheless an important level to work at.

Thus, wherever PA of good practice is carried out, it promotes a change in recognised thinking, and it is good. Whether facing the frustrations of seemingly endless resistance in a Ministry, or listening to farmers elucidate their problems, PA leads to greater empowerment.

The International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED) works at all these scales in West Africa. The IIED's PRA-Sahel Programme has established PRA training networks with key institutions in Burkina Faso, Mali and Senegal. Their aims are:

- To strengthen the capacity of relevant institutions to conduct participatory planning, follow up and evaluation of development programmes at the grassroots level;
- To identify obstacles to PRA development in the region; and
- To maintain standards in the use of participatory methods (Gueye, 1995).

Supporting each level of the participatory development process, from bureaucracy to community, is vital in instilling a permanent change. For such a process to succeed, the IIED have identified that there must be:

- A conscious and critical adoption of the principles and spirit of PRA as a working plan;
- The commitment to involving grassroots communities in long term participatory planning;
- An awareness that PA are not fixed methodologies and are adaptive and creative;
- The training of staff, not only in methods, but also the roots of PA;
- The development of an organisational structure that promotes the philosophy of participation;
- An awareness that objectives will not be achieved quickly (Gueye, 1995).

Box 2 below describes the above aims in practice in an example of a participatory approach to training in Senegal.

### **Box 2. Participatory Approaches in Senegal**

In northern Senegal, the NGO Associates in Research and Development (ARED) has collaborated with IIED to establish a PRA training programme for some communities. As part of this process, ARED has published a handbook in the Fulfulde language.

Involving grassroots communities in the preparation of training workshops producing teaching aids and elaborating teaching methods accessible to all parties concerned, are essential in the overall participatory process.

Village animators, trained in PRA by ARED, now act as village facilitators in a community based process of participatory planning. This process allows the communities to plan and conduct their own analysis without the presence of any external facilitators ('power to').

This situation presents many advantages. First, biases stemming from the interaction with outsiders are offset. Second, plans are made according to the community's own constraints. Third, distortion of information to suit external agency needs becomes unnecessary, as the results of the process are fed into the community's own development process. Finally, the principal of 'optimal ignorance' works well as information is provided by the community itself, who can therefore decide what is useful or not in the context of their own activities.

Source: Gueye, 1995.

Another example of a participatory approach to development in West Africa is *Gestion de Terroirs*. *Gestion de Terroirs* began as a political participatory tool to increase the effectiveness of rural investment but has now become an instrumental participatory tool for rural resource management programmes (see Box 3). This example highlights the difficulties in transferring theory into sustained practice within a wider context of changing political circumstances.

### **Box 3. Gestion de Terroirs: From Politics to Practice**

The origins of *Gestion de Terroirs* can be traced back to the mid 1980s from the Government of the socialist leader of Burkina Faso, Thomas Sankara. It came from the need for an extra level of governance at the village level to allow public participation in the investment and development process. At that time there were four levels of administrative structures; national Government, regional level administration, provincial level administration, and district administration. Below this, on the village level, there was no structure that allowed for planning or administrative activities for development purposes.

The Government of Burkina Faso created an institution called *le Programme Sahel Burkinabè* (PSB), which was officially attached to all the ministry offices, with support from international donors to co-ordinate development activities. Sankara and PSB had talks on how the Government could co-ordinate all development projects and develop structures for bottom-up planning. This came from the rationale that, without structures at the village level, there could be no discussions about investment and planning. The concept of *Gestion de Terroirs* was developed to provide community organisational structures to allow for bottom-up planning and participatory development. *Gestion de Terroirs* originated from a political will to improve national planning and investment from a grassroots base, i.e. the village, through building organisational and institutional structures in a participatory process.

Unfortunately, the present president, Blaise Compaoré, did not carry through the initiative started by Sankara. Presently, *Gestion de Terroirs* has been transformed into a development approach and has been formalised, most recently by the United Nation Sahelian Office (UNSO). In essence, it is a response to land management in areas that have experienced high localised population growth and are consequently undergoing a management crisis, i.e. as local situations change, old management practices are no longer effective for resource management and so new

systems need to be developed. The word '**terroir**' essentially means 'land' but is defined as a spatial entity traditionally managed by a village community ('the village') which has occupation and exploitation rights founded on accepted responsibility and a competence recognised by all users of the 'terroir' i.e. a land territory under a common property management scheme (UNSO, 1994).

### **Case Study: Participation, Agroforestry and Extension in Kenya**

The Kenya Woodfuel Development Programme (KWDP), later known as the Kenya Woodfuel and Agroforestry Programme (KWAP) began in 1983 and was implemented through ETC Kenya Consultants. It was designed to deal with predicted future fuelwood shortages, particularly within the densely populated highlands of Kenya. It operated in two areas with the objective of attaining self-sufficiency in woodfuel at household level through agroforestry and extension techniques. In addition existing organisations (governmental and non-governmental) were to be strengthened and a monitoring system developed.

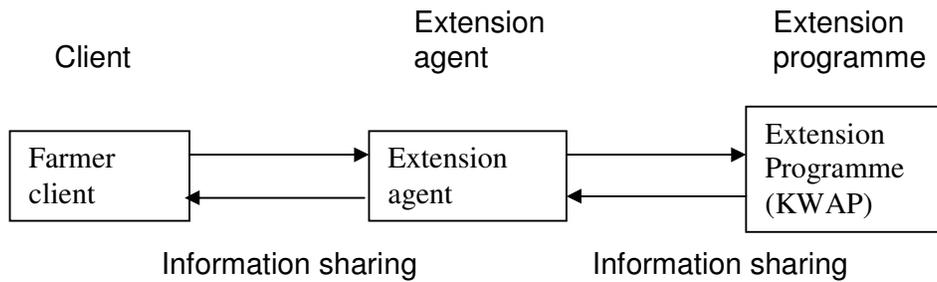
Participation was central to KWDP's ideology and part of its mandate was to involve the community from the very outset in the identification and analysis of their woodfuel problems. Before field activities commenced, the first priority for KWDP was the development of detailed understanding of the local people, their problems, coping mechanisms and socio-cultural aspects. Only with such initial information can local problems be fully understood and full participation occur.

In addition a two-way concept was developed in extension activities in order to further facilitate participation. The two-way extension approach can be defined as a joint venture between two people in which both parties have an interest and play a complimentary role. This is based on the knowledge that:

- The farmer/householder is a resourceful person with valuable experience and can contribute positively to the development process.
- Practical and lasting solutions must come from those affected, because they are the ones who can understand the extent of the problems.
- Extension is a means of increasing people's ability to solve their own problems.

In this approach the extension agent sees himself not as an 'expert' coming to the farmer to 'impart' knowledge and give instructions, but as a partner in a learning process where there is a mutual exchange of information. The two-way approach is a horizontal relationship in which the parties compliment each other. The extension agent provides a two-way bridge between clients and the extension programme shown in the following figure.

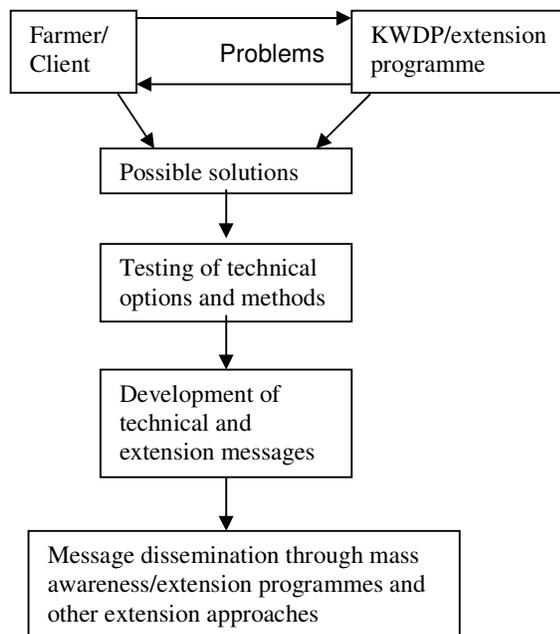
**Figure 1. Two-Way Extension Approach**



The two-way approach is a farmer centred approach, his participation is encouraged from the onset. This not only includes the sharing of information, but also authority and responsibility. Both parties are therefore responsible for decision making and implementation of activities. This in contrast with the conventional one-way approaches, which tend to be message centred, and in which the extension agent assumes the role of an expert coming to teach the client in a top down relationship in which the farmer takes no responsibility and has no authority.

Two-way extension takes place either with individual farmers or with groups. The two groups of actors work together to identify and analyse problems, then find solutions that both parties find realistic. Possible solutions are then tested on farmer's plots and in the research station. The more successful trials are further developed with farmers, resulting in practical and acceptable technologies and methods. Technical and extension messages are developed and tested with the farmers which are then disseminated to the community through mass extension approaches. The working together process between KWDP and the target group can therefore be summarised as shown in Figure 2 below:

**Figure 2. KWDP Working Process**



Using this extension technique certain cultural factors were identified which formed barriers to addressing the wood fuel problem. Women for example were responsible for fuelwood collection, while it was the responsibility for men to plant trees for pole production and there was little discussion between the two groups about their respective activities and existing problems. There were also certain tree planting activities that were taboo for women.

In order to raise awareness of community problems and cross the social barriers which prevented the discussion of such problems a 'mirror technique' was developed. This is a technique that uses local drama, songs, role-play, films and poems at large rallies. The technique places a 'mirror' in front of the community so that it is able to detect and understand its own problems. The method emphasises the identification of social and cultural constraints that limit family discussions on issues that affect the household. Local villager perception of community problems is used to produce the script and local actors are employed in order to give authenticity to the play.

In addition, the following were also achieved through utilisation of this participatory approach:

- The establishment of seed production units in schools which were used as demonstration units, to provide seeds for the school and surrounding community and to test the performance of new species in different agro-economical zones.
- Establishment of agroforestry clubs in schools with the provision of practical training for school teachers in order that teachers could take over from KWDP extensionists.

### **Case Study: Participation in Mozambique**

In 1997 the African Development Bank provided funding to the Natural Resources Department of the Mozambican Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries (Gestao dos Recursos Florestais e Faunisticos – GERFFA) for a five year project. The GERFFA project, facilitated by ETC(UK) Technical Assistants, extends over five years. During this time a sustainable wildlife and forestry management plan is to be developed that can be adopted at a national level.

An integral part of the project involves work with local communities in order that information can be obtained and management plans devised taking the community perspective into consideration. In order that this is a participatory process, leading to empowerment of the local communities rather than being purely extractive, a degree of implementation activities are being carried out for which a separate fund has been made available. One area in which such work has taken place is in Nhambita Regulado within the Buffer Zone of Gorongosa National Park.

Work with this community initially involved spending an extended period of time (4 weeks) within the community and carrying out holistic action-orientated research. The research was designed to incur maximum community

participation and involved a number of PA techniques such as mapping, scoring, ranking, time-lines, seasonal calendars, daily time-use analysis and trend and change analysis. In addition, RRA methodologies were also used and an extended questionnaire technique, where responses were not fixed and rigid but flexible thus allowing the respondent to discuss issues of utmost concern to him/herself. Participant observation and anthropometric measurements were also used. Throughout all fieldwork period the research team assumed the role of student rather than expert.

Such research provided a holistic picture of the interrelated activities within the community of which natural resource use is an integral part. Throughout the research period the community identified and ranked the various problems within the area. These were wide ranging, some related to the overall economic development of the country while others were specific to the community and could be resolved with GERFFA assistance. None of the problems were related to natural resources directly, indeed the natural resource base was perceived to be intact. The research showed however that forestry resources were being used unsustainably and illegal hunting activities were taking place (Howell et al: 1997, Si Lta (1997)). However, the main problems stated did relate indirectly to natural resource use. For example lack of economic development and related infrastructure was stated as one problem. The link between this scenario and illegal and unsustainable forestry and hunting activities was evident.

In order to address this problem several strategies were worked out in co-ordination with the local community as follows:

- Establishing trade links with GNP in which GNP purchases excess produce from the local communities for use within the park or sale urban areas.
- Installation of a grinding mill which will be purchased by GERFFA and repaid by the local community through a credit scheme. This will save women at least 11 hours work per week and retain grinding fees within Nhambita Regulado. (Women presently walk twice per week to the neighbouring Regulado in order to use a grinding mill.)

The community decided to establish a central committee in order to manage and implement these projects. A revolving fund will be created in the following way:

- A percentage of the payment made by GNP to each farmer will be retained by the community committee in a revolving fund. There is presently a large disparity between urban and rural prices of, for example, maize (which is 100% more expensive in urban areas). GNP will pay a fair price between the two in order that farmers continue to profit despite paying a fee to the committee.
- A percentage of monthly milling fees will be used to repay GERFFA through the credit scheme. The remainder will be retained by the community committee revolving fund.

The revolving fund will be used to develop other community development programmes as decided by the local community.

These projects are still presently in the last stages of the planning phase. It is envisaged however that implementation and management will be carried out by the local community with GERFFA acting as advisor and facilitator. Contracts are to be drawn up in which both parties have clear responsibilities. Training is to be provided in credit management by a related NGO. Mechanical training is to be given to the mill operator and tools purchased.

The financial sustainability of the projects should be guaranteed due to the demand that was evident for both projects. It is envisaged that the projects will empower locals to meet their basic needs without degrading the resource base illegally or unsustainably. In addition, the impetus, funding and organisational framework will be available for local people to identify and implement other development initiatives within the area, therefore leading to self-mobilisation.

### **Participatory Monitoring and Evaluation**

Monitoring has traditionally been a funding proviso, and has focused more on how money has been spent rather than on its impact for the beneficiaries. A characteristic of earlier monitoring was its focus on project inputs, measured by volume (i.e. number of farm implements distributed) or types of service rendered (i.e. workshops held). Measuring success by input however, marginalizes the question of relevance and effect. A combination of dwindling aid resources and the positive results of 'empowerment', has prompted development agencies to view monitoring and evaluation as a mechanism whereby project beneficiaries can be more involved and assume more responsibility for their own future. The increased involvement of beneficiaries in this role has been termed 'participatory monitoring and evaluation'. Unfortunately many agencies view the participation of beneficiaries as the end product rather than a means to an end. For projects to be sustainable, the beneficiaries must assume not only more control but full control.

Participatory monitoring and evaluation is a mechanism that provides continuous feedback between all stakeholders of a project, on the programme's progress, affecting activities at various levels of implementation. Most projects involve four stakeholders: the donor, the implementing agency, the host government and the community or beneficiaries. Effective monitoring must meet the needs of each group, but at the same time the role of the stakeholders must change. There needs to be a progressive move away from the influence of the donor and implementing agency toward co-ordination by the government and ownership by the community.

### **The Problems of Participation**

Today there is a rapid uptake of PA approaches and their widespread use in the field of rural development. However, the central danger lies in the fact that organisations are simply using the name and techniques of PA without any

thought or uptake of the philosophy of PA. For example, the words “use your own best judgement at all times” are rarely trusted in PA activities and this is evident in the volume of lists, checklists and ‘dos and don’ts’ that PA manuals offer. These checklists offer a positivist screen to hide behind in what is ultimately a quasi-ethnographic research and development approach that ultimately improves understanding through a prolonged period of contact with the researched group.

There is also the problem of poor transfer of PA techniques through inexperienced trainers and consultants. Label has spread without substance (Chambers, 1997). Ill qualified trainers have delivered many poor courses which have often been in a top-down, didactic manner which creates confusion amongst participants about the nature and use of PA. Training courses have often been in the form of traditional lectures rather than hands on training in the field. It should be noted that where training does take place amongst ‘real’ people great care must be taken that those communities are not disrupted through ‘raising their expectations’, or other disturbances. PA is about needs identification and problem resolution at a fundamental level. If no action is taken on the communities’ recommendations, the groups involved become demoralised and demotivated. As Schrekenberg (1996:119) honestly points out why she did not use PRA (but used RRA instead) in her research: “The PRA emphasis on villager participation and control of the research process and of the results would inevitably have raised many expectations, which I was in no position to fulfil”. Unfortunately, not all organisations have her integrity and frequently PA are used solely for research by research organisations. Chambers (1997) says that confronting behaviour, which is the root of PA, is much more difficult than teaching methods. In their rush to win contracts, consultants and trainers only teach the methods they know. It should also be recognised that most of the good PA trainers are from development and academic institutions in the south.

The most commonly encountered obstacles to a participatory approach can be seen in Table 3.

### **Table 3. Obstacles to a Participatory Approach**

1. Local government agencies and bureaucratic forces, despite their rhetoric of support, have reasons to fear farmer participation and may seek to divert the threat. They may appear to accept the participatory programmes, but then take them over and give them a completely different meaning.
2. Some professional technical advisers and development workers find it hard to accept that rural people have something to contribute to technology development.
3. Many organisations, both governmental and non-governmental, lack the flexibility and the internal openness to follow a participatory approach. Where bureaucratic or charismatic leaders dominate and dictate day-to-day work of their staff, there is little hope that the latter can develop strong participatory interaction with their 'target group'.
4. A large part of the rural population – women and youths - face special obstacles: heavy labour inputs prevent them from taking part in meetings; cultural restrictions prevail against appearing or speaking at open meetings; their expertise and independent interests are easily neglected in community action. Deviation from the norm, which is implied in experimentation with new ideas, sometimes raises very strong opposition.
5. In most countries, there are disadvantaged minorities which are distinguished by race, religion or ethnic group. The participation of these minorities in development activities may be strongly resisted by the dominant groups.
6. The poverty of certain categories of the rural population and their bad experiences with (non-) supporting agencies may have robbed them of any hope for improvement, depleted their self-confidence and increased their distrust of outsiders. This results in a 'culture of silence'.

There is also the risk that a participatory methodology is seen as providing a rational, systematic and coherent framework from which to work from. However, this rationalist approach will effectively destroy PA ability to understand and work with messy, complex, unpredictable and chaotic production systems and rural realities.

A final aspect to the dangers of PRA, which does nothing to improve the image of the African farmer, lies in the centrality of visual aids for research. It was initially thought that because of the high levels of illiteracy and low numeracy levels, visual aids were an effective way to stimulate discussion and analysis. These visual tools were made with local materials, sticks, stones, leaves, etc., and diagrams were designed in the soil. However, with the advent of PRA uptake by organisations such as the World Bank, there have been glossy and sanitised reconstructions of the PRA toolbox which can be, literally, carried around in a briefcase and spread on any available surface. The recent World Bank Participatory Development Toolkit (World Bank, 1994) presents a stage in an aspect of PRA which should be worrying to all involved in development. It consists of very basic, roughly drawn diagrams in bright primary colours which include a diagram of a dirty and unsanitary village made up of rundown shacks next to another diagram of a clean village with clean streets and toilets and modern buildings. The kit also contains games of snakes and ladders that would appeal to any child up to the age of ten. This kit implicitly says that if Africans

could not understand the development objectives of the 1980s then they will have to be put across in a more basic manner. Not only are products like this an insult to the intelligence of farmers, they also reinforce stereotypes and racist attitudes of the relationship between a trustee (the north) and a minor (the south) (Gardener and Lewis, 1996).

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<sup>i</sup> The 'African Charter for Popular Participation in Development and Transformation' was adopted in Arusha, Tanzania, in February 1990, at the end of the International Conference on Popular Participation in the Recovery and Development Process in Africa. The conference was a collaborative effort between African people's organisations, African governments and United Nations agencies. It emerged from suggestions by non-governmental organisations to the 1988 mid-term review of the United Nations Programme of Action for African Economic Recovery and Development, 1986-1990 (UN-PAAERD).