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**Participatory Approaches to Development:  
An Analysis of the Experiences of Development  
Projects in Sudan**

A thesis presented in fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree of  
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in  
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New Zealand

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## Abstract

This thesis aims to explore and analyse the experiences of participatory development projects in Sudan. The study focuses on participation in development, an issue that has attracted debate and discussion since the early 1970s. To contribute to this discussion and create more knowledge on this issue the White Nile Agricultural Services Project (WNASP) and North Kordofan Rural Development Project (NKRDP) were selected as case studies. Through various methods the nature and potential of participatory development approaches and interventions have been explored with the aim of identifying the factors that influenced people's participation, and suggesting ways to improve the practice of participatory development at grassroots level.

The study found that although the projects encouraged and claimed to adopt participatory approaches, people were not engaged in a process through which participation could achieve empowerment or create real changes in their lives. The outcome of people's participation in the projects was influenced by development providers' policies, credibility and behaviour of staff, nature and amount of resources, socio-cultural norms, power relations, and communities' previous experiences, organisation and level of education. This suggests that primarily, designing participatory development programmes requires an in-depth understanding of prevailing social, economic, political and physical environments. Secondly, development providers should adopt approaches that accept negotiations with communities and challenge oppressive situations. Finally, if participatory development is to achieve its objectives, local communities must be provided with resources, information and skills.

Based on evidence from powerful individuals in North Kordofan, this thesis suggests a moral-obligatory approach as one of the ways to improve the practice of participatory development in Sudan. This approach requires a fundamental change in development providers' policies, visions and credibility. If the essence of participatory development is adhered to, and if strategies and plans are designed collectively then there is an opportunity for making real change in the lives of those addressed by development interventions. This thesis concludes that more research is needed to explore the values, role, and impact of development providers and facilitators, as well as the nature and potential of local communities' participative values, organisations and practices.

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## Glossary of Sudanese Terms

Al-Hakama'a	A woman who speaks with wisdom and offers consultation
Dar	Community centre
El-Goodeya	Community-based mechanism for conflicts resolution
Feddan	Unit = 0.42 ha = 1.03 acre
Ijara	Leasing contract
Magmuat Negash	Focus group discussion
Mudharaba	Participation contract
Murabaha	A purchase and resale contract
Musharaka	Participation contract
Nafir	Mobilisation
Qard al-Hasan	Good loan
Salam	A purchase contract
Sanduq	A traditional participatory savings/ revolving fund
Sheikh	A village headman
Takaful	Social justice and solidarity
Umda	Locality headman
Wali	State Governor

## Glossary of Terms and Abbreviations

ABS	Agricultural Bank of Sudan
ARC	Agricultural Research Corporation (North Kordofan State)
ASF	Agricultural Support Fund
CCU	IFAD Central Coordination Unit / Khartoum
CDF	Comprehensive Development Framework / World Bank
CSOs	Civil Society Organisations
DANIDA	Danish International Development Agency
DFID	Department for International Development / UK
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organisation
FCB	Farmer Commercial Bank / Sudan
FINIDA	Department for International Development Co-operation / Finland
FNC	Forests National Corporation
FRC	Federal Rule Chamber
GAD	Gender and Development
GCRT	Gender Center for Research and Training / Khartoum / Sudan
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GoS	Government of Sudan
GROs	Grassroots Organisations
HDA	Human Development Approach
IAAS	Institute of African and Asians Studies, University of Khartoum
IFAD	International Fund for Agricultural Development
IFAD-CCU	IFAD Central Coordination Unit
IFPRI	International Food Policy Research Institute
ILO	International Labour Organisation
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IRDS	Institute of Research and Development Studies, University of Khartoum
ISS	Institute for Security Studies
MAAI	Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Resources and Irrigation (State)
MAF	Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry (Federal)
MESA	Ministry of Education and Social Affairs (State)
MFLF	Ministry of Finance and Labour Force (State)
MFNE	Ministry of Finance and National Economic
CDS	Comprehensive Development Strategy / Sudan
NGOs	Non-Governmental Organisations
NKRD	North Kordofan Rural Development Project
NKS	North Kordofan State
ODA	Overseas Development Administration / UK
ODI	Overseas Development Institute / UK
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
WB-PDLG	World Bank-Participatory Development Working Group
PDW	Popular Development Works
RC	Red Crescent
SAP	Structural Adjustment Programme
SCOVA	Sudan Council of Voluntary Agencies
SDD	Sudanese Dinars (SDD 1.00 = US\$ 0.005)

SIDA	Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency
SOS	Sahel International / UK
SPLA/M	Sudan People's Liberation Army/Movement
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
UNICEF	United Nations Children and Education Fund
UNOPS	United Nations Office for Project Services
UNRISD	United Nations Research Institute for Social Development
USAID	US Agency for International Development
USDS	United States Department of State
VDOs	Village Development Organisations
WB	World Bank
WFP	United Nations World Food Programme
WID	Women in Development
WNASP	White Nile Agricultural Services Project
WNS	White Nile State
WRI	World Resources Institute

## Chapter One: Introduction

If people are left out, if self-styled experts and highhanded planners push them around, then nothing can ever yield real fruit (Schumacher, 2000:140).

### Background

The mainstream development strategies that dominated the 1950s and 1960s focused on economic growth and the top-down diffusion of development. They also had significant influence on postwar development in developing countries (Brohman, 1996:202). These models assumed that increased production would generate higher income and consequently, reduce poverty and improve the populations' well being (Griffin, 2000). These top-down approaches have been criticised on both theoretical and practical grounds (Stein and Harper, 2000:68). Many analysts contend that mainstream development strategies increased the socioeconomic inequalities in most countries (Black, 1991; Friedmann, 1992; Willis, 2005). Kotval (2006:87) asserts that the outcomes of top-down strategies suggest that there is more than one way, theory, or solution to attain a better physical, social, and economic environment for communities and the people.

On the other hand, development organisations acknowledged that major development projects had failed because people were not involved in their formulation (Rahnema, 1992:117). Since the early 1970s these organisations began searching for alternative, more people-oriented approaches (Brohman, 1996:203). It becomes clear that without such participation, planners could not understand the aspirations, perspectives and thoughts of the diverse public they serve. When alternative development theories emerged in the 1970s they focused on 'people as agents, or creators, of their own histories' (Stein and Harper, 2000:69). Within this theoretical framework 'Participation' was perceived as one of the tools of economic development strategies (Abbott, 1995:160; Brohman, 1996; Willis, 2005).

The Theory of Participation asserted that persistent poverty and isolation as well as inappropriate and unsustainable development programmes were the outcomes of top-down planning and non-involvement of local communities in the process of identification and programme design (Mosse, 2001:28). Participatory development is conventionally

represented as an outcome of the recognition of the shortcomings of top-down development approaches (Cooke and Kothari, 2001:5). Participatory development is a political and social process as much as an economic one (Schneider and Libercier, 1995a). Development providers are assumed to consider people's perceptions, local knowledge as well as material needs otherwise development cannot produce 'real fruit' (Schumacher, 2000:140).

The central focus of 'alternative' development in the 1970s was on people's basic needs (Brohman, 1996:208). Further, alternative development approaches argued for people's involvement in decisions and actions that would lead to their empowerment. The major donors and development agencies began to adopt the concept of 'participation' or 'participatory development' in order to improve the projects and the programmes effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability and promotion of stakeholder capacity, self-reliance and empowerment (OECD, 1995; Narayan, 1995; Karl, 2000).

The importance of participation to development was stressed by a number of theorists and development professionals. For example, Kumar (1994:87) explains that the debate about participation in the 1980's had focused on various areas of concern; the new movement stressed the need for self-reliance as well as ecological aspects, gender, human rights, world peace, self-determination and democratisation. Schneider and Libercier (1995b:56) affirmed that participation should be at the centre of development efforts, through adjustment of conventional approaches and methodologies, by establishing new relationships among the stakeholders and viewing people as partners and actors of their own development. In 1999 the World Bank's (World Bank, 1999a) findings suggested that participation promotes ownership, brings long-term attention to human rights issues, improves sustainability of development programmes and promotes learning and results-based orientation. It began to be said that some conditions are found to be necessary for enhancing participation, such as democratisation, decentralisation, building confidence among various actors, readiness to share power, and access to assets and rights (Mathur, 1995; Schneider and Libercier, 1995b; Brohman, 1996; Al-Hardallu, 2001). In the new millennium there is a trend to broaden the participation debate to encompass governance issues. This is accompanied by the emergence of the 'participatory citizenship' concept, which links participation in the political, community and social spheres (Gaventa, 2004:29).

The practice of participatory development has received increasingly strong critiques (Rahnema, 1992; Thomas, 1994; Kothari and Minogue, 2002; Gaventa, 2004; Waddington and Mohan, 2004). Many challenges to participatory development were identified and related to community mobilisation, capacity building, planning, partnerships and sustainability. To overcome these constraints Kelly and Caputo (2006:234) suggest that greater attention should be directed at the role of government and non-governmental agencies.

This thesis examines the practice of participatory development in Sudan. This chapter, in particular, introduces the research project and outlines the main issues and themes of the study.

### **Importance of the Research Project**

Today governments and development organisations generally claim that they are promoting a philosophy of participation that advocates people's capacity and right to define and control their own development. Despite this claim along with the widespread acceptance and adoption of participatory approaches to development, the actual impact of participatory approaches on beneficiaries and on social power structures as well as their sustainability, remain unknown (Eylers and Foster, 1998:101). Recipients are expected to contribute to development interventions by allocating their local resources and taking over activities once external assistance has been withdrawn. This is based on the belief that 'participants' contributions increase effectiveness and sustainability, but there is little evidence to support this assumption' (Cleaver, 2001:36). For example, regarding sustainability the World Bank's Operations Evaluation Department (OED) (World Bank, 2001a:1) finds that only nine of its twenty-seven agriculture projects were classified as 'sustained', eight more were 'doubtful' and the remaining ten were 'not sustained'. However, one of the strong assumptions is that if participatory processes work well, they will ensure sustainability of any designed or approved policies. The same document (World Bank, 2001a:2) concludes that the 'World Bank and government agencies have insufficient understanding of how to encourage communities to contribute to project design or to build effective organisations that represent different groups of a community'.

Many participatory development theorists assert that support and belief in participation is almost universal, but development of tools and techniques to put it into practice, and



knowledge of obstacles and how to overcome them, has lagged behind (Mathur, 1995:153; Gerrit, 1997:2). There is also concern about the appropriateness of participatory approaches and their ability to reveal the reality of poor people and involve them in the decision-making process (Nelson and Wright, 1995; Cleaver, 2001). Many participatory development theorists (Rudqvist and Woodford-Berger, 1996; McGee, 2002 among others) contend that the concept of people's participation in development planning, policymaking and decision sharing has remained a matter of rhetoric rather than a practice. This may raise the question of whether participatory development approaches challenge or fit within socio-cultural contexts and how the outcomes of participatory development processes could be enhanced. This thesis asks, is it the lack of reflection of real experiences of communities at grassroots level within participatory literature that leads to this failure? Apparently there is a need for empirical analysis of whole participatory approaches and practices that are developed or adopted by development projects in various contexts. To understand the motives for people's participation in development there is also a need for in-depth investigation of indigenous participatory values, organisations and practices. It appears that an analysis of various development interventions in different settings is needed to enhance knowledge and to contribute to improvement measures. This research has focused on analysing the experiences of participatory development projects in Sudan.

In 1992 the government of Sudan adopted a ten year Comprehensive Development Strategy (Sudan Government, 1992). Within the framework of this strategy the government committed itself to encourage production, use resources more efficiently, and build sustainable economic, financial and institutional structures for economic development. It aimed to increase people's participation in order to create a social balance and protect the local people from the negative effects of liberalisation and the free market economy policies. The government and the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) have jointly planned and implemented several development projects. These projects through participatory approaches, aimed to support the government's policies and improve living conditions among involved communities. Useful discussion on the meanings of participation requires a context (Mosse, 2001:18) and for this reason the North Kordofan Rural Development Project (NKRDP) in Sudan was chosen to conduct this research. While the researcher was in the field, IFAD Central Coordination Unit in Khartoum and research participants from academic institutions (IRDS, IAAS) suggested studying the experiences of the White Nile Agricultural Services Project (WNASP) (Fig.1.2 p 13). These development projects offered a framework

within which to understand the nature, potential and likely effects of participatory interventions (Hickey and Mohan, 2004a).

Participation as a topic is of professional interest to me. I was involved in community development programmes as a field worker for many development projects in Sudan and Yemen. I also offered voluntary services to many non-governmental organisations in Sudan, Tanzania and the Middle East. Being a development practitioner for sometime has also made me an active participant, rather than a passive participant observer. As an active participant it was more difficult to view the situation as an external observer would. I consider my previous experiences in different regions of Sudan as part of the resources that helped in gathering data and understanding the situations and people's own expressions. This situation requires an awareness of the researcher's role to control personal impact on the research, avoid subjectivity, and be fully accountable for views, thinking and conduct (Olesen, 1994).

### **Contribution to Knowledge**

The information and explanations emerging from this study will be examined in relation to the theoretical and conceptual framework of participatory development and alternative development approaches. This thesis addresses two issues that are not widely covered in the literature. The first issue is the lack of knowledge about participatory development experiences within the Sudanese context, as this has not yet been explored and analysed through empirical studies. The second issue is the role and potential of local participatory values, organisations and practices. This thesis aims to provide information and knowledge that can be used by development planners, decision makers, donors, projects management, non-governmental and local community organisations to set policies or design strategies for promoting genuine participation, and plan for sustainable and successful future development interventions in Sudan.

### **Research Question and Objectives**

Theoretically since the early 1990s people's participation has been adopted in Sudan within the mainstream discourse of development, believing that the top-down approach did not achieve development. Al-Hardallu (2001:131) argues that in practice, all the government plans and commitments led neither to effective and genuine decentralisation nor to a better quality of life through people's participation. In this regard this study sets out to examine the

nature and potential of participatory development interventions and mechanisms, as there is a need to understand the ideologies, goals and aspirations of the actors involved in order to analyse a concept (Broad and Beishon, 1977:17). This thesis explores and analyses the nature of interactions between local communities and development providers. It also attempts to find out if the development agencies, Government of Sudan and IFAD, have employed locally acceptable participatory approaches, empowered local communities and created desirable changes. To address these issues it is aimed to develop the following central research question:

*How can the outcomes of participatory development projects in Sudan be enhanced?*

To answer this question the study will achieve the following objectives:

- Describe the nature and potential of participatory approaches adopted by development projects in Sudan.
- Identify the capacities through which the development providers' policy, projects strategy, staff behaviours, and participants' power, values and motives have influenced the participatory development process.
- Describe the potential of local participatory organisations and practices in mobilising local communities and ensuring their contribution in development interventions.
- Assess and describe how gender and other differences affect the participation of women and other groups in development initiatives.
- Identify the factors that have influenced people's participation in development projects.
- Identify ways through which participatory development practices can be improved.

To address the research question and study the social phenomenon of participation with its complexity and multidimensional nature has guided the researcher to select a case study strategy, which is, according to Yin (2003), a comprehensive research strategy and not only a data collection method or design feature. As mentioned earlier, the two case studies are the North Kordofan Rural Development Project (NKRDP) and the White Nile Agricultural Services Project (WNASP). The NKRDP was implemented in 2001 and is expected to phase out in 2007/8, while the WNASP was implemented between 1996-2001 and is always referred to as one of the final experiences that current participatory development

interventions benefited from. The WNASP staff and assets are no longer in place. The participatory development experiences of the WNASP are examined in Chapter Six and referred to as a secondary case study. The experiences of the NKRDP are reported in two chapters (Seven and Eight) and referred to as the major case study. The selection of case studies was influenced by the phenomenon under study, these being participation, representation of local settings, and availability of cases that offer a chance for studying participatory approaches to development. Both projects were located in different areas where there was diversity in terms of people's origin and traditions as well as the physical and natural environment. These contrasts offered opportunities to conduct comprehensive research and explore the extent and quality of people's participation in externally financed projects.

The strategies of both case studies in which participatory approaches were at the centre of their planning and implementation raised issues central to the focus of this thesis. Accordingly, the analysis is based on the experiences of people involved in two projects, however, the study included through interviewing and analysing of participatory processes and practices, a national perspective. Academics, politicians, NGO activists, and development practitioners, at national level, were interviewed to develop a general understanding of the Sudanese framework for development.

Different techniques such as participant observation, interviews, focus-group discussions and participatory rural appraisal methods (PRAs) were employed to communicate with participants. The qualitative participatory research suited the ethical and philosophical context of this study, which focused on participation. I employed participatory methods for gathering the data and involving the participants throughout the data collection and initial analysis by informing them about findings and accommodating their comments and corrections. The combined methods approach was employed in this research, producing qualitative interpretations and some quantitative findings.

The research participants of this study included local people in the project sites regardless of whether they benefited from the projects, project staff, and state government officials who influenced the projects' interventions and operations. It also included development professionals, NGO activists, and academics all of whom have acquired diverse knowledge of local participatory culture and experiences with various development interventions. The

study promoted self-reflection among different actors and primary participants. It also encouraged discussion between the participants and the researcher. Having a diverse range of participants from the project's management to local communities and at national level created space for a wide range of related issues and concepts to be raised and explored through personal contact. Women at both project sites are very much involved in social relations and have a great deal of knowledge and information about local environments and people. Being a female researcher facilitated the interaction with various community groups, especially women and families.

Local participants were asked about their experiences and perceptions with regard to participation and participatory development interventions and they were queried about how the outcomes of participatory development could be enhanced. They were also asked about indigenous participatory approaches and if they could form a basis for participatory development efforts. The specialists' contributions offered explanations and an interpretation of the issues raised that influenced development processes in general, and people's participation in particular.

The findings from the case studies reveal that people are very much aware of their needs and problems and have their own way of participating in development programmes. The study proves that people's values and traditions have a great influence on the way they interact with external development providers. The study findings, mainly in the NKRDP, contradict the common assumption that powerful and elite groups may manipulate the participatory development processes. The case study raises concerns about development providers, policies and professionals' unity, technical skills, and capabilities in investigating local knowledge and values as well as employing a process approach throughout the projects stages. The study also raises questions about the role, contribution, and reputation of national NGOs.

This study argues that there are several challenges facing participatory development in Sudan, firstly, with regard to establishment of relationships between government institutions/authorities and ordinary people. This requires a political context in which citizen's rights are respected by the government and powerless people are given opportunities to speak out, participate and set rules that maintain their rights and guarantee accountability

and transparency (Vincent, 2004). Secondly, providing financial and technical support to community organisations that represent the diverse interest groups that are fully accountable to the poor and marginalised people. Finally, there is a need to encourage and support the establishment of effective networks and links between local community organisations, private sectors, international organisations, and government institutions.

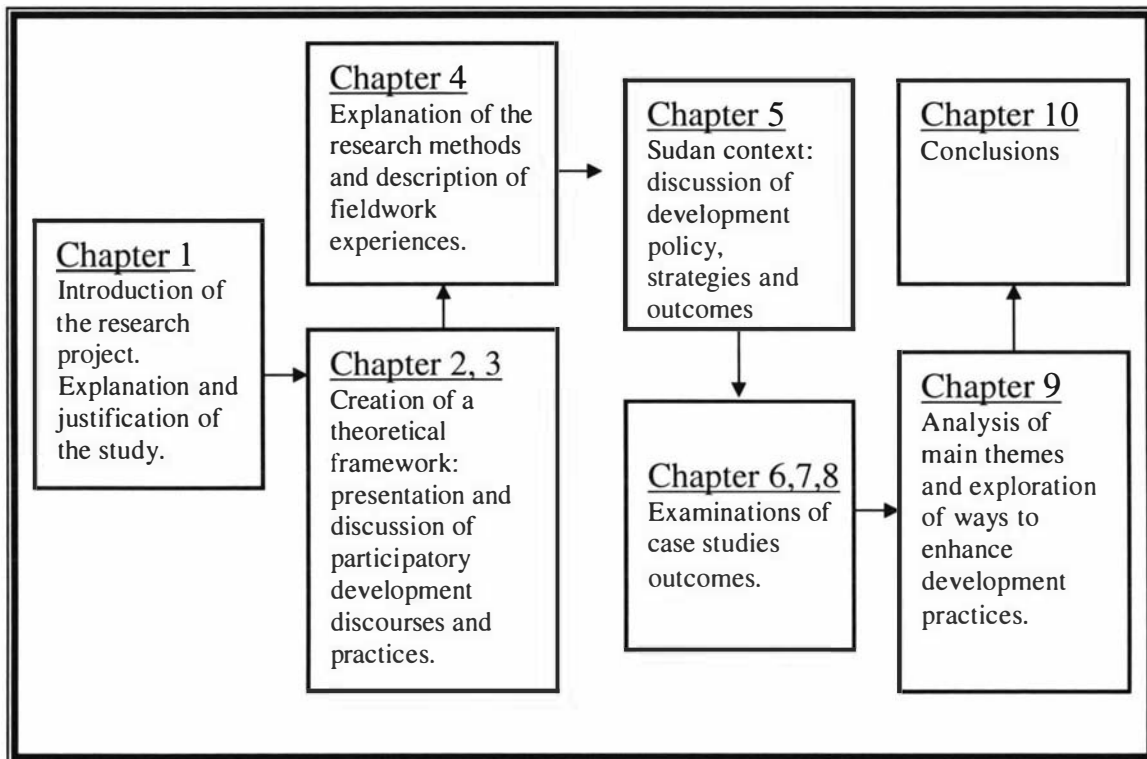
The emphasis in this study is on the importance of indigenous values, structures, and practices that have shaped the local participatory development efforts. It is suggested that utilising local knowledge and supporting the trusted grassroots organisations when planning and implementing development interventions is beneficial. This thesis also proposes an adoption of a moral commitment approach that ensures the transparency and accountability of all development partners, especially government institutions, development agencies, and national NGOs.

Contribution to knowledge and practice of participatory development is demonstrated through the following: 1) exploration of the practices of development projects at grassroots level within the Sudanese context, which is the first in depth empirical analysis of participatory development experiences. 2) Exploration of people's own perceptions on development interventions. 3) Identification of local communities' participatory values, organisations and practices within specific context, and proposing some measures that can contribute to enhancing the outcomes of people's participation.

This study focuses on participatory approaches to development at the grassroots level, however, while analysing the experiences of specific development projects some significant issues emerged which require further analysis. It appears that further research regarding the roles of development providers, especially government and international development agencies and the impact of their interventions along with their staff behaviour needs to be conducted. Further research is also required to explore the NGOs' values, credibility, and accountability processes. The local participatory cultures, organizations, and practices in various settings are another area that calls for further exploration

## Organisation of the Thesis

**Figure 1. 1: Thesis Organisation**



Chapter Two provides a theoretical framework for the research topic. It offers an overview of development theory and the emergence of alternative development approaches. It discusses the impact of development interventions within the context of mainstream paradigm and the direction of development within the context of alternative development approaches. It also explains how participation became the most prominent term in development intervention since the 1980's. Chapter Two examines the meanings and objectives of participation and outlines the main concepts that surround participatory development such as local knowledge and empowerment.

Chapter Three illustrates how development communities are concerned about the practice of participatory development. It examines the role of development providers and presents some local participatory development experiences. It also explores the factors that influence the practice of participation. The chapter refers to limited literature on indigenous participatory norms and practices.

Chapter Four focuses on research methodology, which aimed to investigate participation as a phenomenon under study. This chapter provides a detailed description of the fieldwork experience, and the participatory methods that were employed to gather data and involve the respondents as active participants in this research. The chapter also highlights the ethical issues considered by the researcher in order to protect the rights of all parties involved. The limitations encountered are also highlighted.

Chapter Five provides some basic information about Sudan. It discusses the political changes that have emerged since its independence in 1956 and influences on the government efforts in achieving development. It also examines the roles and nature of civil society organisations and discusses their potential to contribute to development processes. This chapter offers a framework for understanding the conditions that affect the outcomes of development interventions at grassroots levels.

Chapter Six reports on the secondary case study, the White Nile Agricultural Services Project (WNASP). This case study aims to explore the participatory approaches and mechanisms that were employed by the WNASP to implement its interventions and encourage people's involvement. The focus of this chapter is to identify the factors that influenced the extent and quality of people's participation and to examine the development organisations' strategies along with the issue of sustainability.

The subject of Chapters Seven and Eight is the major case study of the North Kordofan Rural Development Project (NKRDP). Chapter Seven introduces the NKRDP and the communities involved using PRA methods, focus group discussions and personal observations. The local participatory values, structures and practices will be explored and examined. In Chapter Eight the interaction between the primary stakeholders, NGOs and the NKRDP are explored and discussed. Various methods such as reports, documents, interviews, observations and Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRAs) methods are employed to explore and understand the

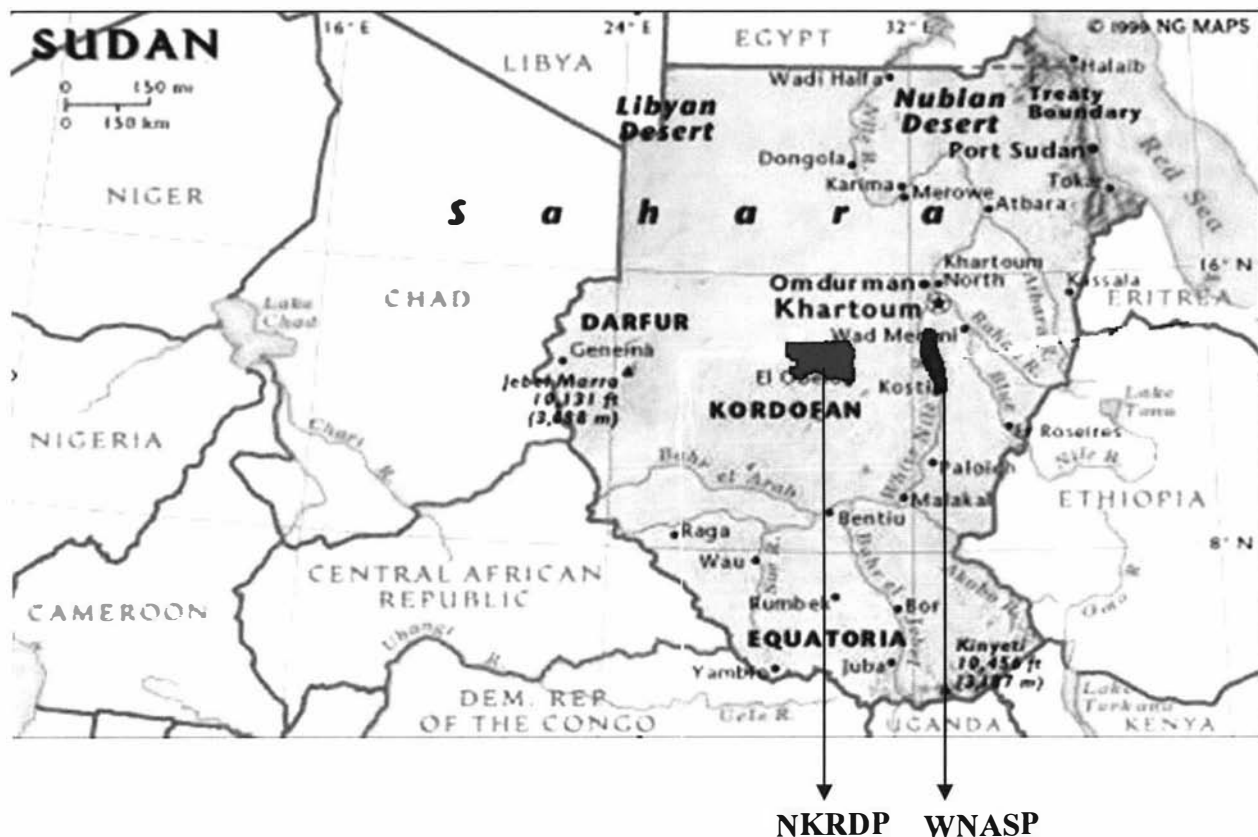


nature and potential of the NKRDP's interventions and hence the factors that influenced local communities' participation are highlighted.

Chapter Nine focuses on discussing the main themes that have been identified in this study. It analyses these themes in relation to participatory development theories aiming to contribute to that discussion. These themes represent the major findings of this study and help in understanding the focus and approaches employed by development providers, professionals' behaviours and inputs along with the impact of power relations and local cultures.

Chapter Ten provides a brief summary and presents the research findings. The chapter concludes with the implications of this study for development practices in Sudan and suggests some areas that require further research.

Figure 1. 2: Geographical Map of Sudan: Location of Case studies



Source: [www.sudantribune.com](http://www.sudantribune.com) and IFAD, 2004, 2006.

## Chapter Two: Participatory Development Discourse

### Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to develop a theoretical framework for the research inquiry and explore the historical background of participation as a phenomenon within the development discourse. It outlines the debate on participation and its potential in overcoming development crisis.

The emergence of the discourse on participation will be examined through the perspective of various development theories and then close attention will be paid to participation, including its definitions, purpose and method of approach. Key elements such as empowerment, women's and civic participation will also be closely considered. Growth Theory dominated in the 1940s and 1950s. During this time development planning was seen as a key strategy to achieve desired changes and the state was assumed to play a crucial role in that process (Schech and Haggis, 2000). Accordingly, progress was conceived as economic growth concerned with material enrichment. This approach assumed that by increasing production, higher income would be generated and this would result in greater income utility and welfare, and hence the living conditions of the poor would be improved (Griffin, 2000:53). Through this approach development planning was focused only on economic transformation while other aspects such as culture and society were ignored.

During the 1960s Modernisation Theory emerged and followed the path of growth theory. Modernisation theorists (Lewis, 1955; Rostow, 1960) advocated abandoning local traditions if communities intended to become modern. Modernisation Theory paid attention to social and institutional changes but economic factors remained the central focus (Brohman, 1996:15 Willis, 2005). Despite the great cultural differences between the developed world and developing countries, modernisation orthodoxy has been converted into powerful strategies, policies and intervention tools, which are assumed to achieve economic development in the Third World. The focus of these development strategies was generally directed toward industry and trade at the expense of agriculture, while goods, services and opportunities for employment were concentrated in urban areas (Brohman, 1996). Meanwhile, adoption of

modernisation was accompanied by spread of large-scale infrastructure projects, such as roads, railways, ports, power lines, and dams. These projects were initiated in the name of development and supported by national governments, the World Bank, and other international financial institutions.

Modernisation Theory is now understood to have caused widespread damage to fragile environments and indigenous cultures in many countries (White, 1994a; Brohman, 1996). Further, Chambers (1974) notes that while the central planning approach during the 1950s and 1960s was accompanied by development expectations of achieving a better life for all people, this has not been realised; instead it was accompanied by a growing number of poor and vulnerable people. Gerrit (1997:3) explains that in the 'Third World' mainstream agricultural modernisation programmes adopted to achieve participation through a trickle-down process. Information about new technologies was delivered to the most advanced and influential farmers who were prepared to adopt the new practices. It was expected that other farmers would eventually follow them, but experience showed that this approach strengthened the economic position of those who were already better off and contributed to widening the gap between the rich and the poor (Brohman, 1996).

Within the dimension of modernisation theory, participation has been called on to promote the concept of citizenship, using approaches such as political participation. The political participation approach was meant to provide security, stability and legitimacy for new governments and a way for strengthening new political systems (Hickey and Mohan, 2004:7/9). As time progressed, development theorists debated and analysed the experiences of the modernisation model in developing countries. Nelson and Wright (1995) suggested that the following factors contributed to this debate: firstly, donors and international agencies were concerned about the failure of decades of conventional top-down forms of development. Secondly, in developing countries there was disappointment with the whole development process. Accordingly, it was widely acknowledged in the development industry that the postwar development strategies had failed to bring the intended benefits to the majority of the world's population. As a result Dependency Theory emerged in the early 1960s. It explained the causes of the poor economic performance and increasing poverty in developing countries, specifically in context of Latin America. Shortly after that 'dependency theory was criticised

for being overly concerned with economic factors and ignoring the social, cultural or political contexts within which development took place' (Willis, 2005:72).

In response to these shortcomings, development scholars started to view development from different perspectives. Rahim (1994:118) asserts that development is a heterogeneous system whose structure is differentiated by socio-economic and cultural factors, such as 'race, religion, class, caste, profession, gender, language and subculture traditions, and it depends on communities and their resources. Hettne (1999:3) confirms that development involves structural transformation', which implies cultural, political, social and economic changes. Therefore, development should be an open-ended concept, as long as there are more problems and our understanding is deepening, it could be constantly redefined (Hettne, 1999:2). Hague (1999:247) suggests that 'there is no universal framework of development for all societies', therefore 'Third World' societies should develop or adopt their own development alternatives in order to rescue their people from poverty, hunger, economic and political subordination, and cultural and intellectual subjugation

Meanwhile, people were identified as a missing element in development efforts, and the limited success of many development initiatives was attributed to the failure of development agencies to involve them in the design and implementation of programmes and projects (FAO 1990; Egger, 1995:105). Since then the international development organisations and bilateral aid agencies started to search for more people-oriented development approaches (Brohman, 1996) and as a result an alternative development approach emerged in the 1970s (Friedman, 1992; Chambers, 1997). This shift was supported by the Emancipating Participation approach that was developed by educational theorists, such as Paul Freire in 1970 that focused on empowering the oppressed. Freire's ideas were later used to develop approaches to political literacy within participatory development. The concept is based on empowering communities through generating literacy from within the community itself rather than using externally imposed concepts (Waddington and Mohan, 2004:223). Much of the pressure for increased participation has come from an ideological conviction that people should have the right to participate in matters that affect them (Broad and Beishon, 1977:17).

Otero (2005) notes that the approach to development has shifted over the last decades, from an emphasis on developing infrastructure and large-scale projects in the 1960s to Alternative

Development in the 1970s, which focuses on meeting the basic needs of people in developing countries. Alternative development argues for the rectification of existing imbalances in social, economic and political power (Friedmann, 1992:9). Alternative development emphasised the inherent capacities and knowledge system of local people and focused on community-level actions (UNDP, 2004:1), while still requiring a responsive state to implement its policies (Friedmann, 1992:35).

In addressing the condition of the poor, alternative development argues for involving them in processes that will lead to their empowerment (Friedmann, 1992:164). Some alternative development strategies included government decentralisation. Decentralisation measures are meant to assist in the mobilisation of local human and material resources, and hence promote more appropriate forms of development (Brohman, 1996:226). Alternative development also emphasises people's rights to access information about any new technologies and successful experiences, which are assumed to overcome their tension and suspicions. Within this context, Overseas Development Administration (ODA) (1995:2) views development from a social perspective, and defines it as 'a process through which economic growth and quality of life will be improved, as every one will be involved'. One of the prominent contributions of participation and the alternative model is the requirement that 'some decisions be decentralised to the margins' (Vincent, 2004:112).

Since the mid-1980s terms, such as participation, empowerment, bottom-up planning and indigenous knowledge have become dominant in the world of development, and by the 1990s all bilateral development agencies claimed to adopt participatory policies (Henkel and Stirrat 2001:169). The World Bank (1996:7) acknowledged that social change does not take place if external experts alone acquire, analyse and present the information. To reverse this situation, Edwards (1993:86) suggests that the goal of participatory development is 'to equip people with skills, confidence, information and opportunities'.

It has also been acknowledged that local people within a country or a community are the ones who should decide the meanings and values of development and benefit from outsiders' knowledge and information without being dominated by it (Rahim, 1994:118). In relation to this argument it has been suggested that for participation to achieve sustainable outcomes, people should be involved in higher levels of decision-making (Schouten and Moriarty, 2003). This argument suggests that there are different levels of participation. Several

hierarchies of participation have been developed for different sectors; these frequently involve terms such as 'passive participation' or 'tokenism' at the low-end of the scale (Pretty, 1995; World Bank, 2001a; Prokopy, 2005). For example, contribution of either money or labour toward a predetermined project can be considered a very low form of participation or even non- participation (Prokopy, 2005). Discussion of participation is combined with various theoretical shifts that have emerged during the last three decades. These include feminist (Boserup, 1989; Kabeer, 1994), cultural (Folbre, 2001; Sillitoe, 2002) and political (Freire, 1970; Friedmann, 1992; Chambers, 1997; Gaventa, 2004) perspectives. As a result several concepts such as local knowledge, empowerment, and power relations have emerged and been linked to participation. All these concepts have contributed to what is commonly known as a 'paradigm shift' in the way people perceive the relationship among themselves, their societies and the planet (Keough, 1998:188). These theoretical paths have paved the way for development tools, such as Participatory Rural Appraisal (Chambers, 1994a/b) to be employed by participatory development approaches.

Having outlined some aspects related to mainstream orthodoxy in the 1950s and 1960s and the emergence of the alternative development approach the next section provides a range of definitions for participation, which is seen as a prominent feature in the alternative development model.

### **Participation: Concepts and Definitions**

Rahnema (1992) notes that participation has many dimensions; to understand it one needs to explore seriously all of its roots and ramifications, which are deeply linked to the heart of human relationships and the socio-cultural realities conditioning them. The concept is rooted in certain traditions and has distinct religious overtones (Henkel and Stirrat, 2001). Moreover, participation has become 'an act of faith in development', something we believe in and rarely question, which is based on three main tenets: (1) that it is a 'good thing', especially for participants, (2) 'getting the techniques right' and (3) considerations of power and politics are seen as divisive and obstructive factors (Cleaver, 2001:36). It has allowed the people to become the subjects of their own development and not simply objects of technology or process (Thomas, 1994:49).

White (1994a) asserts that it is relatively simple to say that participation is an important component of development, but it is not a simple or small task to mobilise people to participate. There is a need to have a participatory capacity, which cannot be built like a road or a dam, but needs to be developed (Uphoff, 1991:488). Participation as a behaviour cannot be imposed from above, according to Kumar (1994:76) it has to grow slowly in individuals and in groups until it becomes part of the community. Bordenave (1994:42) compared the creation of participative society to the influence and contribution of families in raising their children, whether through a dialogue or an authoritarian manner. Bordenave puts emphasis on the education system and its role in preparing future generations for a participative society, which needs the following conditions: adoption of a participatory administrative system inside the school, assignment responsibilities to the student, participation in community social events, and adoption of a participative methodology inside the classroom.

Freire (1970:46) asserts that if people are not aware of the causes of their conditions they will continue to react in a passive and alienated manner, even if asked to respond differently. When people develop a participatory competence they would be involved in community affairs. In this instance, powerless people need to be aware of the conditions that constrain their active involvement in their social and political environments. However, the risk is that the oppressed have been excluded and emotionally suppressed for a long time. Freire (1970:48/51) suggests that this situation could be overcome through dialogue, reflections and communication in order to gain participation and commitment. Moreover, participation should create consciousness or force participants to 'become conscious' and see realities around them (Stockes, 1995:73). If this happens people are expected to respond differently if it does not. When people believe that they have had true participation in any decision that affects them, they will be willing to accept outcomes, even if it adversely affects them, in contrast to that, if decisions are imposed on them by outsiders or even the government, they are likely going to reject them sooner or later (Stiglitz, 2002).

### ***Defining Participation***

In order to construct a framework to conceptualise and analyse the participatory development process there is a need to define participation. The Oxford English Dictionary (p.268) defines participation as 'the action or fact of partaking, having or forming part of; the fact or condition of sharing in common, with others or with each other'. Rahnama (1992:116)



explained that participation could be 'moral, amoral or immoral; either forced or free; either manipulative or spontaneous'. Rahnema concludes that participation in general is associated with moral or desirable goals and is seen as a free exercise process. White (1994b:30) also views genuine participation as 'a free act and adherent to moral', which is driven by human compassion, unselfish motives, sensitivity to the feelings and worth of others, supportive communication, openness to change, and the shifting of responsibilities and power'.

Definitions and concepts of participation in development have evolved over time. Their roots can be traced back to community and popular participation, promoted mainly by non-governmental organisations (NGOs) in the 1950s and 1960s. In the late 1970s and early 1980s, multilateral agencies, such as the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO), International Labour Organisation (ILO) and the United Nations Research Institute for Social Development (UNRISD) also began to promote people's participation in development projects and programmes (Rudqvist and Woodford-Berger 1996). The word 'participation' was linked with the word 'people' in the field of development planning and decision making when Robert McNamara (the President of the World Bank) in 1973 raised it as part of the 'new directions' for the Bank strategy (White, 1994b:21).

Blackburn and Holland (1998:3) define participation as 'a way of viewing the world and acting in it. It is about a commitment to help create the conditions, which can lead to significant empowerment of those who at present have little control over the forces which condition their lives. The Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA, 1991:17/18) describes participatory development as 'a process whereby individuals and the community are actively involved in all phases of development'. Similarly, ODA (1995:94) views stakeholders' participation as a process whereby all those with an interest play an active role in decision-making and in the consequent activities, which affect them. The Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA) links participation to democracy and equity goals as an objective in itself which should be promoted in all development projects. It is also considered a means of increasing efficiency, effectiveness, and sustainability in development projects (Rudqvist and Woodford-Berger, 1996:3).

The terms participation, participatory development and popular participation are used interchangeably (Long, 2001). Popular participation refers to larger numbers of people who can be persuaded to take part in public decision-making processes (Nelson and Wright,

1995:7). According to Nelson and Wright the initiation of this concept was partly led by Southern organisations when five hundred grassroots organisations at the Arusha Conference in 1990 called for popular participation and transformation. Participatory processes refer to those by which decisions are made in national governments as well as those processes used at local and provincial levels, at the workplace, and in the capital market (Stiglitz, 2000:165).

The World Bank initially defined participation as ‘a process, through which stakeholders’ influence and share control over development initiatives, decisions and resources, which affect them’ (World Bank, 1996:4). This definition was criticised for grouping all stakeholders together, ignoring inequalities that mainly affect the ability of poor and marginalised groups. As a result the World Bank-Participatory Development Working Group amended the Bank’s definition to put an emphasis on those who are poor and marginalised, that is, primary stakeholders. The amended definition reads as ‘a process, through which primary stakeholders’ influence and share control over development initiatives, decisions and resources, which affect them’ (Tandom and Cordeiro, 1998 cited in Long, 2001:14).

According to Lahiri-Dutt (2004) participation means that the state pays attention to local opinions about projects and plans, especially if there is a conflict between the greater common good and local interests. The question that could be raised in some ‘Third World’ countries is whether the citizens’ opinion on public policy-making is treated as significant or not? In non-democratic societies citizens’ opinion might not be considered, or of anyone’s concern. Brohman (1996:251) concludes that participation is a multi-dimensional concept, which makes it a complex issue, and because it is an inherently political act, it can never be neutral. Therefore Nelson and Wright (1995) place participation within an ideological framework. This means that people, according to their ideological backgrounds, would give the term ‘participation’ different meanings. Accordingly, Long (2001) suggests that the true definition of participation emerges from meanings and practices in a real context. For the purpose of this research we will adopt the World Bank amended definition as it refers clearly to the role that primary development actors are expected to play if people’s participation in development is to be considered.

### ***Objectives and Purpose of Participation***

There is debate about the purposes of participation, whether it is a means or an end (Cooke and Kothari, 2001:6). The defined objectives of participation appear to vary according to the type and purposes of projects as well as the policies and strategic context of funding and implementing agencies. Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) (1993) suggests that participatory development is essential, for at least two reasons: 1) it strengthens civil society and the economy by empowering groups, communities, and organisations to negotiate with institutions and bureaucracies, thus influencing public policy and providing a check on power of governments; and 2) it enhances the efficiency, effectiveness and sustainability of development programmes.

Rahnema (1992:121-122) explains that when participation was introduced as an alternative development model it was intended to perform at least four functions: a cognitive, a social, an instrumental and a political one. In cognitive terms, development had to be. Through participation, people's knowledge and understanding would form the basis for a new form of development. On the other hand, the instrumental function had to provide the concerned parties with information about previous failures and to demonstrate alternative strategies. In social terms participation gave people new hope and re-activated the development, while the political function of participation was to provide development with a new source of legitimating and empowering people and establishing a link with targeted populations. Because the social function is related to people, the firms or development agencies have to address the social needs at village level before developing support systems which are appropriate to the required field actions (Bagadion and Korton, 1991:73).

In the last decade theories on participation distinguished between participation as a means and as an end. According to Karl (2000:13) participation as a means, is a process through which people cooperate and collaborate in development projects and programmes; as an end, participation is a process that empowers people, as they gain skills, knowledge and experiences, which create self-reliance and self-management. Participation has also been classified according to the level of community involvement in development interventions, it is low if the decision-making process and management is under the project control, and of a high-level when powerless and poor people are cooperatively and fairly involved in all

development stages (Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency, 1991; Overseas Development Administration, 1995; World Bank, 2001a). The World Bank-Participatory Development Working Group uses a model for measuring the intensity of participation: information sharing, consultation, decision-making and initiating action (World Bank, 2001a). Information sharing occurs when project beneficiaries are informed about the project objectives and the way it will affect them. Consultation means that people are consulted on key issues and their views are considered. Decision-making occurs when people are involved in making decision about the project design and implementation. Finally, initiating action takes place when people make proposals and decisions about implementing such activities.

There is agreement in the literature that to achieve development objectives, an effective people-oriented approach has to be adopted. This was assumed to empower local communities who would be responsible of their own development. For Cleaver (2001:37) the theory of participatory approaches is reflected through the efficiency argument, which focuses on achieving better project outcomes, and the equity and empowerment argument, which focuses on enhancing the capacity of individuals to improve or change their own lives. However, the purposes of participation have drawn a clear demarcation between two perspectives:

- Participation as a ‘means’ to increase efficiency and effectiveness, and ensure the sustainability of a project or development programme.
- Participation as an ‘end’ to promote stakeholder capacity, self-reliance and empowerment. This perspective will form a base for identifying ways to enhance the outcomes of people’s participation in development interventions.

These two perspectives present a conceptual framework through which participatory process can be understood in the case studies of this thesis, the White Nile Agricultural Services Project and the North Kordofan Rural Development Project.

### **Participation as a Means: Efficiency, Effectiveness and Sustainability**

The two perspectives a ‘means’ and an ‘end’ are framed by certain concepts. Effectiveness, efficiency, and sustainability have shaped the first perspective that views participation as a means. ODA (1995) views projects as more effective when stakeholders’ interests have been

identified and included in the project design, by that they will share ownership of development interventions. According to ODA efficiency would be attained when the stakeholders provide the project with wider knowledge and possibly share in the financial costs. Sustainability relates to the concern about people's capabilities to sustain their current activities and to cope with future changes. It has been stressed in many documents, strategies and discussions that 'participation' is central to putting the concept of sustainable development into practice (Neefjes, 2000).

Most development agencies adopted participation as a means and many claimed to employ both the 'means' and 'ends' perspectives. According to Rahnema (1992:117-120) governments and development agencies have shown unprecedented interest in the concept of participation. Rahnema asserts that there are many reasons for that trend; participation is no longer a threat; governments and institutions need participation to achieve high productivity at low cost and accept it as long as they are in a position to control the process; participation is seen as an instrument for achieving development objectives; participation is a politically attractive slogan.

Critics have long argued that development agencies are less willing to share decision-making power with primary stakeholders, and that the efficiency argument is the real reason for the popularity of participation (Cleaver, 1999; Berner and Phillips, 2005). Brohman (1996) suggests that instead of viewing participation as a means to improve project or programme outputs it should be seen as an end in itself. This means that it should embody some form of empowerment. Brohman (1996) asserts that people's participation in development requires attention to power relations. The following section looks at this issue with more emphasis on primary stakeholders, who are always seen as the most important group within the participatory development process.

### **Participation as an end: Empowerment and the Dynamic of Power**

Brohman (1996) notes that the distinction between participation as a 'means' or as an 'end' implies a method for identifying and measuring empowerment in participatory development projects. Definitely the concept of participation has been given different meanings in different situations; genuine participation is believed to embody some form of empowerment (Schneider, and Libercier, 1995a). The concept of empowerment gained popularity in the 1980s especially among village-level practitioners (Black, 1991:39). Nair and White (1994)

assert that empowerment is not a good or service to be given by someone, but a condition related to self-reliance as individuals and groups strengthen their capacity for actions and hence develop their own source of power. The World Bank defines empowerment as 'a process of enhancing an individual's or a group's capability to make and express choices and to transform them into desired actions and outcomes' (World Bank, 2004:5).

According to UNDP (2004) empowerment strategy aims to initiate learning and organising processes. Through these processes local people in rural and urban areas can; 1) define and set their goals and objectives; 2) assess the implications of options available to them and 3) hold responsibility for actions made to achieve their agreed-upon objectives. Empowerment in this case is about institutional capacities, alliance building, development of personal identities and confidence (Waddington and Mohan, 2004). Simply put the purpose of empowerment is to make beneficiaries more powerful (Berner and Phillips, 2005:26). Freire (1998) asserts that the facilitation of communication is an essential condition to allow people reflecting on their problems, asking questions and finding solutions. Freire's approach introduced the concept of empowering local people through active participation in an open and free dialogue. Through dialogue people would share and develop joint ideas and knowledge and gain control over their own life and circumstances. Local poor need to be genuinely empowered if alternative development strategies are to achieve their objectives. This requires fundamental changes to the status quo and distribution of power among local people and not just scattered reforms (Brohman, 1996).

Lozare (1994) notes that the poor have limited sources of power, for example limited capacity resources, organisation and little access to the instruments of power. Lozare (1994:239) questioned whether empowerment is 'a product of participation or whether it is a precondition to participation'. There is no blueprint prescription for assuring participation and empowerment, but participation does not occur in a vacuum. It is determined by socio-economic, environmental, political and cultural context within which individuals and communities live (UNDP, 2004:2). Mathur (1995:159) argues that the principle of participation is to empower people. There is always the risk that if participatory development is imported from outside it may lead to a new form of dependency instead of empowerment and liberation. In general, there is still confusion as to who is to be empowered, certain categories, the poor, the socially excluded or the community (Mosse, 2001:38-9)? In this regard Scheyvens (1999:63) suggests that all individuals in the community should be

empowered to feel that they have valuable contributions to make. A central concern is that participatory approaches should encourage a process of empowerment (Kothari, 2001:139).

Francis (2001:74) argues that if development projects have no financial constraints, some socio-cultural factors, if unaddressed, may influence the participatory development processes. Understanding the dynamics of power relationships is essential for the success of development processes (Lozare, 1994:230). There is general agreement in the literature that participation should be seen as 'an end' in itself rather than as 'a means' to improve projects and programmes outputs (ODA, 1995; Brohman, 1996; Karl, 2000; Kothari, 2001; World Bank, 2001b). However, there should be some consideration for the type of intervention and whether it intends to empower people or not.

For communities to be empowered, the concepts of participation, representation and leadership are important. Oliver (2002) points out that there are three assumptions about the leadership systems or the structure of power in a society or organisation: (1) that all the systems and structures are man-made; (2) that most of the rules are made by those at the top; and (3) that those at the top serve themselves first. Accordingly, those who are in power might not be ready to allow others to take part, set the agenda, and manage and control resources (Blackburn and Holland, 1998:6). Community groups must have a willingness to be empowered and accept the essential features and attributes that are inherently part of being empowered (Barrett, 1995:16). Power can be analysed and understood through the social norms and customs within a society, considering that all individuals are vehicles of power (Kothari, 2001:141). Kassam (1997) identified some features that could indicate if people are empowered: developing a sense of being liberated from former social, economic and political conditions, developing more control over their lives and destiny, developing ability and capacity for resisting exploitation and injustice by rich and powerful groups

In summary the discussions on participation generally agree that if people are empowered they will be able to express their views, organise themselves, initiate plans, allocate resources, make actions and manage their own development activities. Active participation is a path to empowerment. Most development interventions mention in some way or another the necessity of active participation in order to empower local communities in general and those who are powerless in particular. In this regard the following section highlights the dominant features of participatory development approaches.

## **Adoption of Participatory Development Approaches**

The terms participatory approach, people-centred approach, bottom-up approach and evolutionary approach all refer to the same concept and are often used interchangeably by development theorists and practitioners. Participatory approaches are viewed as the most effective way of achieving equitable social and human development. It owes its popularity to a widespread concern with the failure of conventional development strategies to make any differences to the life of marginalised and poor people (Mathur, 1995:153). Participatory approaches have emerged in order to bring development practice nearer to the people as a result of dissatisfaction with an expert-led, top-down approach (Sillitoe, 2002) and attempts to challenge the inequalities in societies (Kothari, 2001:142). Participatory approaches to development include the identification, collection, interpretation, analysis and representation of specific forms of local knowledge (Kothari, 2001:143) using mechanisms through which the stakeholders, especially local communities, influence and share control over development initiatives, decisions and resources (World Bank, 2001b:1). These mechanisms are crucial to how participatory development achieves the objectives of empowerment, efficiency and sustainability (Weekes-Vagliani, 1995:67).

Mosse (1998:6) identifies a set of interrelated shifts in approaches to planned development, which have emerged as a result of past failure and new policy goals: firstly; a shift from narrow technology-led project to sectoral concerns, such as sector-wide reform and cross-sectoral issues, such as poverty and gender. Secondly; a project is no longer a closed control system as there is a shift from project-centered to organisation-centered concerns, and interagency links and partnerships become important in achieving development objectives and enhancing institutional reforms. Thirdly, a move from the blueprint approach in development planning to more flexible ones based on the finding that development solutions often evolve from experimentation and practice rather than from design. Finally, there has been a shift from centralised approaches towards the more decentralised 'bottom-up' participatory approach.

Many theorists (for example ODA, 1995; Davis, 1998; Mosse, 1998) differentiate between two approaches, the blueprint approach and the process approach. The blueprint approach consists of reasonably fixed objectives, predetermined outputs, and well structured



implementation procedures. The process approach allows for flexibility in project design and wider objectives are normally defined; project inputs, outputs and immediate objectives can be developed when the project proceeds. This approach suits the project that seeks stakeholder participation (ODA, 1995:104). This shift from the blueprint approach in development to a learning process approach is a form of response to unsuccessful centrally planned projects. It implies a concern about reducing public sector costs, increasing effectiveness and long-term sustainability through the involvement of local people, private sector, development agencies and NGOs (Mosse, 1998:7). The process approach has been developed as a result of experiences with many non-infrastructure projects, in which the blueprint approach did not achieve expectations. The process approach generally requires more time at the preparation and implementation stage, and regular revision but it is important for projects whose primary objective is to build institutional development and ensure sustainability through people's involvement (ODA, 1995:112).

At present there are concerns about efficiency and empowerment. These concepts match with the neo-liberal policies that focused on cost saving and self-reliance. This neo-liberal model emerged in the 1980s, which emphasised reducing state intervention in order to achieve greater economic growth. According to Willis (2005:204) at present neo-liberalism has become the key theory for designing global development policy. Willis (2005) points out that this policy does not necessarily mean that 'all development theorising will fit into this model', meaning that it can be implemented in different ways and at different levels. This would explain how some international organisations, such as the World Bank and IFAD, who supported the neo-liberal policies, have engaged in some grassroots approaches to development.

Within the neo-liberal perspective, community participation started to receive institutional support because of cost-saving, project efficiency and self-help (Mayo and Craig, 1995:2). People's participation in development was related to the overall goal of cost reduction for the public sector and hence increasing project efficiency. Brohman (1996) notes that in the era of neo-liberalism, popular movement has often tried to fill the gap where government has no ability or willingness to do so.

Emergence of participatory approaches was accompanied by development of various participatory methods. These methods have been viewed as a means by which inclusion of marginalised people can be achieved (Chambers, 1997) and their role is to contribute to achieving empowerment. They include farming system research, rapid rural appraisal and participatory rural appraisal (RRA, PRA), participatory action research, participatory poverty assessments, environmental impact assessment, social impact assessment, training for transformation, and gender analysis.

PRA has attracted most attention and it has gained a central position in providing methods for participation planning, monitoring and evaluation (Mosse, 1998). In the early 1990s PRA spread rapidly through training programmes, networks and publications. This was followed by adoption of its techniques by many development agencies (Long, 2001:7-8). Chambers (1994:953) defines PRA as 'a family of approaches and methods to enable rural people to share, enhance and analyse their knowledge of life and conditions, to plan and to act'. In Chambers' view (1997:103) PRA can reduce dominance of development professionals and can empower the poorest. Therefore those who are selected for participation in PRA events are often the disadvantaged because they have limited or no resources and services, or control over decision-making (Kothari, 2001). PRA is most effectively adopted in organisations that have flexible and adaptive cultures and structures, have lateral communication, and are more democratic and participatory (Chambers, 1994a).

Chambers (1997:211) expressed his concerns at the rapid spread of bad practice due to the superficial understanding of the techniques, limited training and inappropriate styles employed by some facilitators. Hailey (2001:93) summarises the problems that were encountered in implementing PRA techniques. Firstly, there is tendency to put too much confidence in the techniques and to perceive them as prescriptions that guarantee the success of the project rather than a tool. Secondly, the facilitation of these techniques needs special behaviours and attitudes as well as suitable training, which are often not taken into account by project managers. Kothari (2001:144) argues that the focus on material inequality when identifying PRA participants may conceal other powers in people lives.

Participatory approaches and methods are commonly employed in development projects, as many development projects are a way of providing financial resources and technical support

to developing countries. The next section explores the meanings and concepts that evolve around development projects.

### ***The Project Approach***

ODA (1995:1) defines a development 'project' as 'a finite investment package of resources, identified and used to design a set of economic and social objectives for a certain period of time'. For Chambers (1974:13) the term project is used to refer to 'a set of organised development initiatives confined to, or considered in relation to a low-level administrative or geographical area', while the term 'programme' is used to refer to 'a set of development initiatives planned for, undertaken in, or affecting several or many low-level administrative or geographical areas'. A project may be part of a programme, but a project may also operate alone without a programme. The literature refers to various phases of the project cycle, (ODA, 1995:8-9; Karl, 2000:9; World Bank, 2001a: 2/3) these are listed as four main phases: 1) the identification or formulation phase. This includes assessment of various aspects of an intended project, usually made by development agencies and/or government representatives. 2) The design phase, also called the project planning or preparation phase. Governments and/or development agencies usually conduct this task. 3) The implementation that starts when the actual activities are carried out. At this stage development agencies and governments tend to seek communities' participation. 4) Evaluation phase. This includes monitoring, feedback, midterm reviews and final evaluation after the completion of the project.

Projects operate in various ways. Some adopt a blueprint or planning-based approach where events are defined before their occurrence and indicators are established at the beginning of the project. The process is considered deductive as events are planned and indicators are identified before its occurrence. The opposite of this is an inductive approach where events are abstracts of recent experiences, which would be more of a learning approach. Mosse (1998) explains that by adopting a learning process approach a project could have a flexible design, and changes would be made whenever needed. This approach is in contrast to the blueprint approach, in which a project design has to be implemented in a specified form (known inputs, outputs, costs and activities) and to a fixed time frame. For blueprint approaches, project management does not have many choices, as events and outcomes are defined before its occurrence. There is no or very little consideration for the social and

political factors, which might influence the projects outcomes. Thomas (2002:2) points out that a project design may be based on inadequate information, or may have a lack of consideration for partner countries' context, value systems and institutional uncertainty, which will affect performance and impact. Some development agencies, such as ODA, made a revision of this approach and decided to delay the identification of indicators until a project is established (ODA, 1995; Davis, 1998).

When the main objective of the project is social development, participation becomes an objective in itself. For economic projects, participation is considered as a means in order to achieve other objectives (White, 1994b:16). White asserted that by 1994 no respectable development project could be proposed or funded without using the word 'participation'. Development projects form a context that provides the different stakeholders with space to influence the type and quality of interventions. In this regard projects could bring different interest groups or stakeholders together to share ideas and make decisions about some aspects related to a certain community. Participation can take place by different groups, individually or collectively in different stages of a project cycle. Karl (2000) explains that people can participate in development projects and programmes in different forms ranging from contribution of inputs to sharing knowledge and decision-making.

ODA (1995:138) notes that imbalances between groups and individuals may influence a project's design and impact. ODA (1995:72-3) points out that women are seen as the most marginalised group within communities. However, the emergence of participatory approaches to development encompasses debate and theoretical shifts that surround gender issues. The following section illustrates how women and gender relations became part of the participatory development agenda.

### ***Integrating Women into Development***

The mainstream development approaches have been accused of neglecting women and gender relations, as women's work has been considered invisible and because it is mostly unpaid and under evaluated (Cornwall, 2003). According to Brohman (1996:278) during the first two postwar decades women were ignored by development theory and practice. Women's needs and interests have also been ignored by macro economic programmes, despite the fact that the majority of the 'Third World' women were involved in productive activities (Brohman, 1996:279; Snyder and Tadesse, 1997).

Koczberski (1998) traces the efforts of large aid agencies in integrating women into their development plans and national economies of their countries. According to Koczberski (1998: 396) the idea of integrating the 'Third World' women into development plans emerged in the early 1970s when development practitioners and researchers in the USA began to push for their representation in development agencies programmes. Since then various initiatives have been undertaken by development agencies and national governments to establish Women in Development units and hire gender experts. These actions have created recognition of women's roles and encouraged more debate on their involvement. However, Koczberski (1998:399) found that the concept of 'integration' has assumed that women were not already participating in development. It also focused on improving women's status through integrating them into 'productive employment' assuming that through moving them from the traditional sector to the modern sector self advance would be achieved (Koczberski, 1998: 399).

Moser (1989) identifies four approaches that determine the capacity of integrating women into development; welfare, equity, efficiency and empowerment. In the 1950s and 1960s welfare programmes included women as a vulnerable group. According to Townsend (1993:171) the welfare approach perceived women as passive receivers of development where as Boserup (1970) revealed through empirical evidence that women in many African, Latin American and Asian countries were in fact marginalised by development. Boserup (1989) argues that women had neither participated in decision-making that affected them and their families nor was their work valued. These concerns had raised attention about women's roles and interests and hence the United Nations launched 1975-85 as Decade for Women. This decade was followed by the organisation of international conferences and assemblies that resulted in various measures to promote women in development programmes. Since then, almost all countries have acknowledged the need for raising the status of women.

Under the auspices of decade for women development programmes focused on increasing gender equity. Further, efficiency joined equity to frame the Women in Development (WID) approach. According to Koczberski (1998:400) the efficiency argument was based on an understanding that women were not contributing to development and therefore WID efficiency policies of the 1980s focused on encouraging women to spare time and work harder in development initiatives. What is called an 'alternative approach' for integrating

women into development is based on criteria from the modernisation theory of development which relied on Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and therefore the achievements of the formal sector (Koczberski, 1998.)

WID framework emphasises women's access to education and employment, which requires reforming legal measures and changing attitudes to integrate women into the modernisation process (Brohman, 1996:283-84). Some argue that although much legislation was changed, practices did not change (Townsend, 1993).

Within the WID framework there is also a focus on anti-poverty programmes. The anti-poverty approaches emphasised meeting women's' practical needs without threatening social change (Moser, 1989). Meaning that the anti-poverty approaches avoided some sensitive issues that related to strategic gender needs (Townsend, 1993; GCRT, 2003). Accordingly, the integration of 'Third World' women into development processes, through the WID approach, was viewed by the radical feminist perspective as a way of increasing exploitation rather than liberation (Kabeer, 1994). This perspective emphasises gender division of labour and devaluation of women's work and insisted on distribution of power between men and women. This framework claimed that 'Third World' women were disadvantaged because of gender divisions (Boserup, 1989) and as a result of these criticisms of WID, the Women and Development approach (WAD) emerged, which was based on Marxist and dependency frameworks. It focused on women's relationships with development and sought clarification for why women were excluded. This view encouraged the revision and adjustment of the WID approach and hence Gender and Development (GAD) emerged in the 1980s. The use of the word 'gender' instead of 'women' directed the attention to social relationships between men and women, which some authors argue have maintained women's subordination (Moser, 1989:1800; Young, 1997:51). GAD focused on relations between men and women, addressed power relations (Young, 1997:51) and viewed women as agents of change. GAD specialists argue that women need sufficient economic and social bargaining power in order to exercise their choices (Jolly, 2000:49). According to Young (1997:53) the GAD approach, especially in the Third World, supports the dual role of the state as employer of labour and allocator of social capital. In this regard, Young points out that there is a need for state support as most women in the Third World have minimal political power.

In summary, the WID approach focuses on women's disadvantages in a male-dominated society while GAD emphasises power relations between women and men (Jolly, 2000). The different approaches for integrating women in development have offered different ways for viewing and practicing development. These approaches focus on 'Third World' women, but their problems and needs were identified by women in development experts and consequently their influence over development process was restricted (Koczberski, 1998:395). Koczberski (1998:406) asserts that the problems of the mainstream development practice, misrepresentation and generalisation, the use of rigid project frameworks, and limited space that allowed for 'Third World' people to define and control their own live, have remained in both WID and GAD approaches. She (Koczberski, 1998:396) views the approaches for integrating women into development as a way of incorporating them into existing development practice under orthodox notions of development.

At present there is growing concern about gender equality. Gender inequality is viewed in term of distribution of income, access to productive inputs such as credit, command over property or control over earned income, as well as gender biases in labour markets and social exclusion that women experience in a variety of economic and political institutions (Cagatay, 1998:8). Gender inequality has been associated with restriction of life opportunities for women along with increased rate of domestic violence (Engle, 1997:35). In this regard, Cagatay (1998:14) points out that the UNDP emphasises a need for transformatory approaches to eliminate gender inequalities, which are about addressing the strategic need of women. As a result when the United Nations set the eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in 2000, promoting gender equality was placed as the third goal.

The MDGs include poverty reduction, education, gender equality, reducing child mortality, improving maternal health, combating AIDS and other diseases, ensuring environmental sustainability and developing a global partnership for development. Besides being set as a separate goal within the MDGs, the UNDP (2006:1) acknowledged that gender inequality in most developing countries is a major obstacle to meeting the Millennium Development Goals. Consequently, the United Nations launched various projects that provided suggestions for national government to achieve gender equality and women's empowerment. The UNDP's Gender Mainstreaming policy programmes and organisational structures are promoted. Gender Mainstreaming is defined as 'the process of assessing the implications for women and men of any planned action, including legislation, policies or programmes, in any

areas and at all levels'. It is a strategy for making women's as well as men's concerns and experiences an integral dimension of the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes in all political, economic and societal spheres so that women and men benefit equally and equality is perpetuated' (Cagatay, 1998:14). Mainstreaming involves ensuring that gender perspectives and attention to the goal of gender equality are central to all activities, policy development, research, advocacy, dialogue, legislation, resource allocation, and planning, implementation and monitoring of programmes and projects (UN-OSAGI, 2007:1).

In general, despite experiences since the adoption of participatory approaches within the alternative development framework, many shortcomings have been encountered. Some theorists criticised the present development agendas and expressed their concerns about its objectives and effectiveness. Rahneimas (1992) and Hickey and Mohan (2004) criticised the alternative development approaches for not defining the institutional support needed to realise its project and/or identifying ways in which political economy shapes agency within development. Pitamber (2001:2) asserts that the approaches used to tackle underdevelopment failed miserably in bringing about significant change in many developing countries. As there is an extremely unequal distribution of productive resources and assets in rural area where poverty is severe and living conditions are deteriorating, the land and other resources are increasingly concentrated in the hands of elite groups.

Both postwar development and alternative development approaches were criticised for their failure to analyse and engage with development as complex socio economic and political processes (Hickey and Mohan, 2004). Although there have been development efforts for many decades, it is debated that there have been no tangible improvements in people's lives and instead living standards in most developing countries have been impoverished rather than enhanced. In 1999 the World Bank (1999a) declared that the development process had been disappointing despite improvements in social indicators. As reports show poverty trends have worsened and most low-income countries are still dependent on aid. Stiglitz (2002:166) analyses the situation and relates the failure of development efforts to absence of rule of law and lack of transparency. Stiglitz (2002:166) argues that these conditions have weakened the economy and undermined participatory processes in many countries. This situation creates global concern about the effectiveness of development processes. As a result, the World Bank launched the Comprehensive Development Framework (CDF) in 1999 that aims to



adopt and consider the continuously changing circumstances and initiate a process to search for better approaches. The basic elements of the CDF are: Firstly, development constraints are structural and social and cannot be solved through economic and policy measures alone. Secondly, policy reform and institutional development require domestic ownership, and cannot be imposed or imported from outside. And finally, successful development needs partnership among government, civil society, development agencies and the private sector (World Bank, 2001b). Kothari and Minogue (2002:6-7) suggest that there was a need to develop new meanings, agendas, processes and targets for development. This means that development theories must be flexible and accept that in practice things change continuously, which requires greater understanding of the actual situation.

Within alternative development strategy, it has been noticed that there is a wide gap between theory and practice, especially in the area of participation. Brohman (1996) notes that some debates about alternative development approaches were directed at the methods used to design and implement development programmes and projects. Others (Simon and Narman, 1999; Hickey and Mohan, 2004) question whether the alternative development strategy itself is really different from the traditional mainstream models, and if what is presented is truly a viable option. Participation theorists and development practitioners still debate the meanings, objectives, and ways of people's participation in development. In the new millennium, participation has gained more focus, and its role in development has broadened as new approaches emerged across theory, policy and practice (Hickey and Mohan, 2004:3).

### ***Civic Participation***

Alternative development strategies were often debated in term of how best to accelerate the growth of production of goods and services. However, in so doing it neglected other aspects such as representation, partnership and citizens' rights (Griffin, 1999: xvi). Because alternative development has failed to identify the sociopolitical agency and/or institutions required to achieve its project, the new agenda of participatory approaches have focused on these themes and tended to involve people as active citizens (Hickey and Mohan, 2004:3). Participation is seen as a guarantee of people's rights to freedom of opinion and expression, and rights to receive and use information (World Bank, 2001b; Gaventa, 2004). Within the contemporary development arenas there is a trend to broaden the participation debate to encompass governance issues. This is accompanied by emergence of the 'participatory

citizenship' concept, which links participation in the political, community and social spheres (Gaventa, 2004:29). This concept assumes that through participatory citizenship people will extend their social status and increase their control over socio-economic resources (Mohan, 2004:66). The concept of promoting citizenship is seen as a tool to overcome the perceived tyranny of localised project-led approaches to participation and provide transformation at different levels (Cleaver, 2004:271). Participatory citizenship intends to engage development agencies and projects in political processes support new spaces for dialogue and participation, and work with and build alliances between state and society. This participatory notion of citizenship is essentially important in societies where people's rights as citizens are completely ignored or cannot be claimed by some minority or specific groups. The concept offers opportunities for communities, development agencies and civil societies to employ a new approach in order to enhance the outcomes of participatory development. The challenge now is to establish a political context in which government respects citizens' rights, and powerless people are given opportunities to speak, participate, and set rules that maintain their rights and guarantee accountability and transparency (Vincent, 2004).

In general, these concepts put more emphasis on participation in civic affairs and decision-making process. They aim to open space for people to think about what type of policies they want, and to engage them in dialogue and different forms of democratic decision-making processes. Recently participation in development has become focused on people as 'makers and shapers' rather than 'users and choosers' (Cornwall, 2003:26). It is clear that the conceptual framework of participation has shifted from low-level participation to high-level participation, from identifying people as target groups and beneficiaries to partners and makers of development.

Having examined the main issues around participatory development approaches the following section looks at one of the most important principles of participatory development, the incorporation of local people's knowledge into programme and project planning.

### **Indigenous Values and Knowledge**

The dominant development paradigms until the end of 1960s tended to dismiss local knowledge. Keough (1998:189) asserts that people who live their whole lives in communities and who have a direct stake in the outcome of development interventions have valuable

knowledge to contribute. However, the modernisation approach viewed traditional knowledge as a part of the problem, being non-scientific, traditional, primitive and irrational. Further, the failure of development projects, especially in Africa and Latin America were considered to be related to these primitive misconceptions. Mathur (1995:160) points out that the planners of development interventions view things differently than recipients, and this is why the externally designed participatory approach cannot yield the expected results. Therefore it was widely believed that effective development interventions would benefit from some understanding of indigenous knowledge and practices (Sillitoe, 2002b). In particular, showing respect and acknowledging indigenous knowledge by external development planners and practitioners may create respect and trust between them and local people and probably facilitate the process of accepting any new technologies introduced by projects (Brohman, 1996).

The emergence of new forms of development, ideas and objectives as well as the way of doing things, creates a kind of struggle and confrontation. This requires different forms of participation and communication, such as having a combined dialogue between the internal and external knowledge. The consequences might be very critical because it involves identity, beliefs and values (Rahim, 1994:119). Local or indigenous knowledge has established itself as a central theme within the context of participatory development. It has become popular to confirm that indigenous peoples have their own effective science and resource use practices (Sillitoe, 2002:2b). According to van Vlaenderen (2004:138) local knowledge includes concepts, beliefs, values, goals and perceptions and processes. It also refers to 'what is', but also to 'how things are done'. Acknowledging and accepting local knowledge is seen as a necessary step in reversing the top-down approaches of development initiatives (Mohan, 2001). Chambers (1997) points out that technical and cultural knowledge is an important element for citizens while searching for solutions or improvements to their problems. Brohman (1996) notes that at the stage of defining and implementing development alternatives, the members of the community often share an interest in preserving and expanding local knowledge and culture. This can be a kind of self-defense against any externally imposed strategies and policies. Moreover, using indigenous knowledge in development programmes may make it more appropriate to local conditions, provide some solutions to certain problems, and create a sense of self-worth and self-esteem among the local people and therefore enhance popular participation and empowerment. People will not

be willing to share their knowledge if they are not made welcome to do so and their knowledge is not respected (Keough, 1998:189).

There has been a general trend that development assistance aims to transfer technology, which refers to movement of material, knowledge and skills from developed to developing countries (Agunga and Scroft, 1994). Rejection or misuse of certain technologies may be related to the fact that these technologies have little or no relation to people's needs, or their lack of skills and training (ODA, 1995). Uphoff (1991:475) argues that it cannot be assumed that local people have all the needed technical knowledge, but neither should it be assumed that they have nothing to contribute. Uphoff (1991) asserts that indigenous technical solutions can sometimes be more appropriate than introduced technology. The stimulation of local experimentation has found to be useful in exploring indigenous knowledge, strengthening people's confidence in their own solutions and producing appropriate options that coincide with ecological, economic and socio-cultural conditions and circumstances (Hagmann et al., 1998:48/51).

Social analysis has emerged as a technique through which knowledge about people and their culture can be gained and used in designing strategies and involving the community in development efforts (Mathur, 1995; ODA, 1995). Those who are involved in production and dissemination of knowledge must be conscious of the potential abuses and uses of this knowledge and act accordingly (Edwards, 1993:85). As some people will use this knowledge to benefit themselves and exclude others there is a need for participatory communication in order to offer opportunities for all partners to exchange ideas and information through an open dialogue.

Participatory communication is an effective approach for exchanging information and knowledge. Communication links the acquisition of knowledge, having access to information, and being able to communicate that knowledge. Participatory communication is 'the type of communication in which all the interlocutors are free and have equal access to the means to express their view points, feelings and experiences' (Bordenave, 1994:43). To put that into practice the intended receivers should be given opportunities to participate in selecting the topics of the message and the channels of dissemination (White, 1994b).

In rural areas where people do not have access to TV, radio continues to be the most influential means of communication. To change radio to a two-way communication medium requires changing the attitude of those who control the media (Thomas, 1994). This means that participatory communication cannot be planned and executed by outsiders, but usually 'emerges as a result of political confrontation, conflicts, and negotiation within a socio-political process' (White, 1994a: 95). Healy (1992) proposes a new communicative, dialogue-based, form of planning to overcome the failures of planning during the last decades. Healy argues that any strategy that excludes debate would generate anti-democratic planning while Oliver (2002) asserts that good projects need good planning and communication with all the participants.

According to Stiglitz (2002:169) without an open dialogue there will always be the suspicion that the decisions were made in the favor of special interests and not on the basis of community interests. For Freire (1970:70/76) true dialogue cannot exist unless the dialoguers engage in critical thinking. He argues that without dialogue there is no communication and without communication there can be no true education. Through dialogue people need to know their objective, their situation, and their awareness of that situation. Freire (1970:77) suggests that through dialogue we must not attempt to impose our view on others, but rather to dialogue with them about their view and our situation. Forester (1989) explains this means that if we listen and respond with sensitivity and care our actions may be freeing and empowering rather than mechanically generating feed back.

By examining the importance of local knowledge this chapter moves towards its end. The next section provides a summary and concludes the chapter.

## **Summary**

This chapter has traced the history of participation in development. Clearly, since the early 1950s, development and the mainstream development theories have gained a lot of attention. However, there is not unity in the perspectives of various development theories. Some perceive development from the economic growth perspective, while others view development as a multi-dimensional concept, which encompasses socio-economic and cultural aspects (Willis, 2005: 200). Deepening poverty and underdevelopment has challenged the practice of

continuing development under an economic perspective alone. Accordingly the mainstream approach to development has started to focus on meeting the basic needs of people and encouraged the adoption of the alternative development approach focusing on people's participation and placing a great deal of the importance on local knowledge. The real goal of participatory development is to provide people with skills, confidence, information and resources to make their own choices (Edwards, 1993:86).

During the last two decades, the concept of participation has been widely used in the discourse of development. The meaning of participation has evolved over time and has apparently influenced theorists' perceptions, and development agencies' policies and strategies. The meaning of participatory development widened to an ambitious frame when it referred to people as shapers and makers of their own development. In much of the literature participation has been classified according to the level of community involvement in development interventions. The theories of participatory approaches are reflected through two perspectives: participation as a means focused on efficiency, effectiveness and sustainability; and participation as an end focused on empowerment.

Most of the criticisms are directed towards the mainstream and populist form of participation in development in the 1980s, which was due to its failure to engage with underlying processes of development (Hickey and Mohan, 2004:11). The recent theories on participation have focused on building relationships between ordinary people and institutions that affect their lives. Accordingly, in the new millennium the concept of participatory citizenship has dominated the participatory development literature. The concept, however, is about a lot more than just consulting people for the successful resolution of social, cultural and economic issues. The primary goal of participation is to give proper responsibility to people for, and control over, their lives.

Having provided a broad context in which participation concepts have emerged the next chapter will focus on more specific elements that are directly linked to participation in practice, such as development agencies, non-governmental organisations and local power.

## Chapter Three: Participation in Practice: Concepts and Experiences

### Introduction

The previous chapter described the main theoretical concepts that accompanied the emergence of participatory development approaches. This chapter examines the links between concepts and practices and highlights the areas that are not, or are scarcely, covered in the literature.

Development theorists contend that participatory approaches to development have not fulfilled their promise of empowering the poor (Rudqvist and Woodford-Berger, 1996; Cleaver, 2000; McGee, 2002; Mohan and Hickey, 2004). Mohan and Hickey stated that:

‘The past decade witnessed a growing backlash against the ways in which participation managed to ‘tyrannize’ development debates without sufficient evidence that participatory approaches were living up to the promise of empowerment and transformative development for marginalised people’ (2004: p3).

The literature on participation also points out that there is a gap between theories and practice (Rahnema, 1992; Thomas, 1994; Rudqvist and Woodford-Berger, 1996; Kothari and Minogue, 2002; Stiglitz, 2002; Gaventa, 2004; Mohan and Hickey, 2004). Lewis (1998:103) asserts that there is more taking place in development projects than is normally defined in the official project documents. Lewis suggests that if this insight could be rendered more visible to project actors, it is possible that more might be learned about project progress and potential. Kothari and Minogue (2002) suggest that there is also a need to have a clear understanding and explanation of causes behind the failure of development and the relations between practice and theory. These concerns underpin the research questions of this thesis, mainly, what are the factors that have influenced participation in development interventions and how the outcomes of participatory development projects could be enhanced.

This chapter begins by highlighting the role and approaches that are adopted by development providers. Next the behaviour of development professionals and the role of community organisations are briefly examined. This is followed by introducing the process of involving

women in community organisations and presenting some practical experiences. The factors that influenced people's participation in development interventions are highlighted and the final section summarises the chapter.

## **Role and Impact of Development Providers**

In participatory development the common name that refers to all those involved in development processes is 'stakeholders'. Stakeholders usually include governments (through their representatives or specialised agencies), donor agencies, implementing organisations, civil society, and local communities. Karl (2000:51) classifies stakeholders into three categories: primary stakeholders as 'those people who are ultimately affected by a project'; secondary stakeholders are 'intermediaries in the process of delivering support to the primary stakeholders'; external stakeholders are 'those not formally involved in a project, but may affect or be affected by it'. Overseas Development Administration (ODA) (1995) notes that within development projects there are three main groups: funding agencies (donors), implementing agencies, and beneficiaries, who are usually considered primary stakeholders. The terms that refer to those who benefit or are affected by development processes is changing over time, from rural poor, target groups, beneficiaries, stakeholders, participants and partners. Different stakeholders may have different interests and their commitment and ownership is essential for achieving successful outcomes (Mosse, 1998). Development projects usually use a stakeholder analysis to identify both the relevant partners / participants and who has roles and responsibilities for decision-making, allocation of resources, planning, implementation, and monitoring and evaluation (Karl, 2000).

In general, development agencies operate in different ways. Bilateral and multilateral agencies work with national governments to identify projects. In most cases they do not involve those who will benefit or be affected by the projects during the planning stage, while International NGOs normally work directly with people and seek their contribution in identifying problems as well as the potential solutions (ODA, 1995; Long, 2001:10/11; McGee, 2002). On the other hand, there are implicit assumptions that national and international NGOs somehow embody the virtues of participation and empowerment (Henkel et al., 2001). This has created considerable debate over what is most useful, relying on national NGOs to adopt participatory development or calling for more collaborative partnership between NGOs and the public sector (Pretty and Scoones, 1995:160).



Since the 1970s development agencies and donors as well as local governments approved a wide range of development projects throughout the Third World. These cover almost all kinds of goods and services but focused mainly on rural communities. Rural development was considered a key for reducing poverty levels, unemployment, and inequality in developing countries. In the literature this trend has received attention due to the fact that all previous development approaches, based on classical development models, have failed to improve the living conditions of rural people or even the urban population (Brohman, 1996; IFAD, 1996).

At the beginning, development agencies were the one who identified, designed, managed, implemented and evaluated development programmes and projects. Since the 1970s they started to show concern for efficiency, sustainability and partnership. The Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) in 1979 led the World Conference on Agricultural and Rural Development that showed more interest in participation. In 1980 the German Technical Corporation (GTZ) considered participation of the poor as one of the main criteria for determining the quality of its work. The Swedish International Development Cooperation Authority (SIDA) in 1981 launched a strategy that focused on involvement of the poor in rural development programmes (Rudqvist and Woodford-Berger, 1996). In 1990 the World Bank formed the Participatory Development Working Group. The task of this group was to review and document the World Bank's experiences of participation as well as other agencies' experiences and to provide the World Bank with proposals in order to make improvements. The World Bank started to support processes where the stakeholders generate, share and analyse information, establish priorities, set the objectives and develop tactics (World Bank, 1996). These people-centred paradigms focused on social issues and aimed to help its field workers to cope with the projects activities. The World Bank Operations Evaluation Department (2001a:2) reported that community participation significantly increased in the World Bank assisted-projects as well as in the preparation of Country Assistance Strategies. Participation has been greatest in projects with community-level activities, such as agriculture, health, water supply, environment and education. It has been less in infrastructure sectors, such as transportation, energy and industry, and least of all in public sector management, financial, and multi-sector projects. There has been less participation in some geographical areas than others, mainly Middle East, North Africa,

Europe and Central Asia Regions. The level of participation was uneven over the phases of the project cycle and many projects allowed for limited participation by women. The quality of participation also varied from one project to another. In some cases, meeting with stakeholders was about gaining their acceptance for the country programme and participants were given little feedback after they were consulted. The World Bank report showed that there was great variation in terms of level and quality of participation. This could be attributed to the purpose and objectives of the development project, the policies of the implementing agency and the socio-cultural setting within which the development intervention was implemented. In 1993 the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) launched a complete reform process with its development activities and intensively adopted participation.

Cernea (1991) views the flow of large amounts of resources through projects as a disadvantage that may affect the normal capacity of local communities to deal with their own problems after the withdrawal of development projects. Charlton and May (1995) however disagree and argue that a development project should be seen as an opportunity rather than a constraint. On the other hand Fernando (1995:180) asserts that participation would be at its highest when access to resources bridged the gap between reality and aspiration. This view challenges the present self-help approach, which is based on a growing belief that projects should be less dependent on external inputs (Okali et al., 1994). The present shift towards self-help approaches by international financial institutions and development organisations was seen by Berner and Phillips (2005:19) as 'a masking defense' against calls for redistribution. It appears that the self-help approach is concerned about efficiency rather than effectiveness and empowerment. Berner and Phillips (2005) questioned whether this approach suits all poor communities and suggested that:

'Governments and NGOS need to make themselves responsive to, not absent from, poorer communities, and especially the poorest of the poor. They need to encourage initiative not by walking away but by offering stable, long-term, targeted financial and technical support' (2005:23).

The practices of participatory development were accompanied by adoption of various participatory methods and techniques, which were assumed to work as an empowering tool for those who participate. During the time between the mid-1980s and the mid-1990s there

were many methodological innovations, which aimed to promote the concept and practice of participation (McGee, 2002). Participatory methods allow the diversity of knowledge to be explored to its fullest (Keough, 1998:190) if local communities are given a chance to express and reflect on their own experiences and perceptions. Many government agencies, international NGOs, bilateral and multilateral organisations claim to use these methods as part of their effort to involve people in development and achieve empowerment.

In general, the practice of development has continued to focus on projects, but with minor shifts in scope and conditions. For example New Zealand's Aid Programme and Australia's Overseas Aid Programme have started to focus on more tightly defined projects and to show more concern about efficiency and accountability (Overton and Storey, 2004:5). Clearly, the success in participatory development projects depends on donors' and implementing agencies' readiness to adopt a process approach and delegate clearly defined responsibilities and decision-making power to local stakeholders (Eylers and Foster, 1998). Accordingly, more importance is placed on involving primary stakeholders as well as different related parties in various development stages, especially planning, and monitoring and evaluation. Thomas (2002:3/6) argues that it was widely acknowledged that the design of a development project is an important part of the planning process, and requires engagement of partners in all aspects of planning to ensure that local needs are incorporated. Additionally, participatory monitoring and evaluation has received special attention. Through participatory monitoring and evaluation, people assess the impact of participation and project interventions (Karl, 2000:121) and they could also be the source of information if any previous development efforts were implemented. Indeed, in participatory approaches, monitoring and evaluation must be shared by all actors, considering the fact that people are able to evaluate their own inputs and achievements from their own perspectives (Schneider and Libercier, 1995b). There are various reasons for involving development participants in the evaluation of the projects performance and outcomes. It helps in building people's capacity and reflects the perceptions of those who are targeted by such interventions.

In this regard, the FAO's People's Participation Programme (1990) developed a participatory evaluation approach based on group monitoring and ongoing evaluation undertaken through group meetings. The Department for International Development (DFID) (2000) developed what is called an Output-to-Purpose Reviews Approach (OPRs). This approach was developed as part of an overall review and reform of project cycle management, and

monitoring and evaluation procedures. It aims to assess the development project programme during the implementation period and replaced what is called mid-term reviews. The key features of this approach are acknowledgment of the importance of placing impact assessment within the context of the development process as a supportive component, rather than paralleling bureaucratic information. Stakeholders' participation and sharing of ownership are essential factors for the success of this approach. OPRs allow changes or adjustments to be made to outputs, indicators and assumptions. It also allows for changes in the purposes of the project, although this could indicate that something was wrong with the original project design.

Non-governmental organisations (NGOs) have been seen as participatory development pioneers. NGOs have gained the respect and trust of donors and other development agencies. NGOs are identified as the most qualified instruments that can involve people in development processes (Rahnema, 1992). Brohman (1996) argues that NGOs, through participatory fieldwork, succeeded in providing local communities with some innovative solutions to their problems. Brohman explains that NGOs have advantages over other development agencies, because of their flexibility, speed of operation, and ability to respond quickly when there are special circumstances. NGOs were given special status of being non-governmental organisations, so that bureaucratic barriers could not trap them (Rahnema, 1992). Willis (2005) points out that NGOs that rely on indigenous knowledge and considered more efficient and effective in providing services. Therefore they could gain the trust of the international community and play a significant role at grassroots level if they intended to achieve that. International NGOs tend to plan and implement small-scale projects, with the emphasis on communities' participation. For them participation is considered as one package, as a means and as an end in itself (ODA, 1995:96; Uphoff, 1991:485).

Despite the intentions and efforts, errors and failures are recorded in the work of all development organisations; whether they are international agencies, bilateral donors, host governments or even NGOs and banks (Chambers, 1997:17). Cernea (1991:189) relates this to their policies, which provide guidelines for allocating resources and structuring individual projects. Baker (2000:1) notes that despite the 'millions of dollars spent on development assistance each year, there is very little known about the actual impact of projects on poor people'. Baker contends that many governments, institutions and project managers are not interested in carrying out impact evaluation because they assume that this would be

expensive, time consuming, technically complicated and might have unpleasant or negative findings. Many authors (Uphoff, 1992; Williams 1992; Schneider and Libercier, 1995b:48; Bhatnagar, Rudqvist and Woodford-Berger, 1996; Karl, 2000:119-121) acknowledge the need for evaluation of participation in development projects and suggested that it serves the following purposes: providing information on the impact of participation on project and programme outcomes and performance, justifying the cost and other investments in participatory development, using the information as a base for re-planning and implementing new projects, and strengthening the capacity of the participants.

Another area that was found to be important for implementing a successful participatory development programme and/or project is building and supporting networks and partnerships. Networks and partnership are meant to create links between donor agencies and recipient communities (Overton and Storey, 2004). Participatory development stands for a partnership built upon the basis of a dialogue among the various actors (stakeholders), during which the agenda is set jointly, and local views and indigenous knowledge are deliberately sought and respected (Schneider, and Libercier, 1995b: 30). The concepts of partnership and relationship dominate most of development agencies' literature. It is believed that some of the attributes of networks have the potential to allow marginalised groups of people to become agents of development. The problem is that if development agencies decided to change the way of managing and implementing their activities they would be influenced by their own motives, which are different between the participating agencies (Lewis, 1998), in this sense it is very important for network partners to be able to negotiate, coordinate and compromise. However, despite all the talk of partnership and empowerment, donors and implementing agencies continue to follow, in practice, the old style of development (Richards, 2004).

Some authors point out that creation of change, through a participatory project, depends mainly on professionals' skills, enthusiasm, experiences and level of motivation (Black, 1991:158-59; Samaranayake, 1998:83). In fact, development professionals have received significant attention in the participatory development literature and it is quite important to examine the various views and see how this group can influence the practices of participatory development.

## **The Role of Development Professionals**

Chambers (1983/1997:2) suggests that professionals, specialists and practitioners from different disciplines as well as politicians and decision-makers, whose work, actions and decisions could influence the poor people should step down, sit, listen and learn from those who are powerless. The World Bank has acknowledged that consultation and listening to people are essential prerequisites for participation. In fact, development experiences show that social change does not take place if external experts analyse the process and present the information (World Bank, 1996:7).

In the participatory development processes the key personnel are the development workers who are in direct contact with people at the village level (Mosse, 2001). They are given many titles: field workers, facilitators, catalysts, change agents, promoters, animators, organisers, and extension workers. In fact, no agency or NGO can work without them (Mathur, 1995). Rahnema (1992) points out that the word participation creates a sense of enthusiasm and hope especially among field workers, who are engaged in grassroots activities. Fieldworkers are the link between local communities and projects, their direct involvement and interaction with locals gives them the opportunities to develop insight and understanding of people's needs, preferences, and perceptions. Fieldworkers usually develop their own explanations and interpretation of communities' culture and perceptions as well as projects' policies and activities (Mosse, 2001). These can be positive or negative and this may create biases.

Development professionals' behaviours and attitudes have been heavily criticised. For example, Chambers (1991:533) views the professionals as much of the problem, while the poor are much of the solution if their needs and knowledge are welcomed and considered. Those practitioners who are backed by their organisations can negotiate or delimit people's choices, which reveal that they have power and can use it to shape the accumulated knowledge and influence the process of empowering the local people (Kothari, 2001:152). Participatory development requires a paradigm shift in the behaviour of development professionals. This shift is mainly 'personal rather than institutional and political' (Chambers, 1997). Lozare (1994:238) argues that development professionals and communicators who encourage greater people's participation in the planning and implementation of development processes should face the following realities: first, the need for changing development workers thinking, and the way they perceive the local people as passive targets of

development programmes; and second, the need to shift more power from development workers to people, and the reallocation of power within a community.

There are others who see professionals as victims just like the locals; both are controlled by donors, development agencies and governments. Taylor (2001) refers to similarities between project beneficiaries and the employees of development organisations in developing countries, as both, in his view, may perceive the organisation as an instrument for their livelihoods. Taylor (2001:122-3) asserts that employers of organisations and targeted communities of development project are both dependents and powerless in relation to the organisation. Based on a case study analysis, Mosse (2001:21) notes that professional staff who try to be more participatory and to focus on investing in communities' needs rather than delivering services, are soon perceived by both project and community as under-performing. Mosse (2001:23) found that villages accepted the presence of project field staff when the village benefited from the services.

Williams and Srivastava (2003) conducted a study on government employees' behaviour. The study analysed the experiences of a completed project in Eastern India and focused on action research's role in promoting governance reform. They found that officials lack of responsiveness was not a matter of personal attitudes, but related to many institutional constraints: 1) lack of training and skills required for working with the public; 2) career progression was automatic and limited to higher ranking staff; 3) lack of incentives for good work; and 4) monitoring of individuals' performance depended on top-down surveillance rather than public accountability.

Professionals can continue to play an important role in projects, as organisers, facilitators, catalysts and animators. They need to be aware of the local system and build relationships with communities through dialogue and conversations. They can be engaged in capacity building activities (Brohman, 1996) by providing communities with knowledge and information and helping them to make the right decision based on in-depth analysis of their situation (Schonhuth, 2002). Furthermore, a cooperative working environment among all participatory development actors, especially among the professionals, requires openness and dialogue (Kelly, 2004) other conflict may emerge. Tembo (2003:45) points out that if

conflicts between development actors are not resolved this will affect the nature of the engagements they have with each other.

Involving local people in participatory development activities is often achieved through community organisations. Many authors and theorists highlight the important role of community organisations as a mechanism for implementing successful participatory development (Uphoff, 1991:495-97; Warren, 1998; Hailey, 2001; Kabeer, 2003). Much of the literature places emphasis on the role of civil society groups, but tends to focus on professional development NGOs and with relatively little attention to the strategic functions and role of grassroots organisations and self-help groups (Mitlin, 2004:176). The following section examines this issue.

### **Formation and Support of Local Community Organisations**

Weekes-Vagliani (1995) points out that there is a need to devise mechanisms to give impetus to participatory development. Local community organisations are seen as one of the mechanisms. Chambers (1991:533) suggests that 'to put people first, and to put poorer people first of all, requires organisations that are strong and sustainable and policies to support them'. In complex socio-political environments the concept and practice of participatory development calls for including local organisations and civil society in decision-making processes (Warren, 1998:122). There is strong belief that building and supporting local organisations is essential for involving people in all development processes. Formation of organisations and making reforms within local structures has been highlighted in the literature and is also raised in this study.

In order to implement participatory development interventions, there is a tendency to rely on NGOs at national and regional levels, and support formation of community organisations at grassroots level. In this regards, Black (1991:160) views development, in theory and in practice, as a 'slave to fashion'. He points out that because the current fashion calls for promotion of community organisations and the involvement of communities in the assessment of needs and planning of projects, all development agencies identify this as their objective, but clearly, there are only few that have put this process into practice. Moreover, many development interventions intend to establish community structures similar to the



arrangements of bureaucratic structures (Cleaver, 2001:42). Brohman (1996) notes that alternative development programmes and projects had adopted the top-down administrative structure and did not afford any opportunities to local organisations to participate in decision-making processes. Uphoff (1991:494) relates this to local organisations, which are often weak or non-existent.

Rahnam (1995:29) points out that NGOs have succeeded in delivering development at grassroots level but in several countries have created new professional elites who enjoy status and benefits, which are equivalent to, or exceed senior government officials. Pretty and Scoones (1995:163) point out that many NGOs in the Third World, especially non-membership organisations, are not accountable. Moreover, it was evident that those NGOs have wasted resources and time of local people (Pretty and Scoones, 1995:164).

Within the field of development there has been a continuous critique and debate about some groups who have been excluded because of gender, ethnicity, class or religion (Kothari and Minogue, 2002). Therefore the gender dimension of development activities has gained a lot of attention and focus from development agencies. The next sections look at this issue and examine some related experiences.

### ***Involving Women in Community Organisations***

Whether it is better to form separate organisations for men and women to or have both in same organisation is still under debate. Uphoff (1991) argues that separate organisations for women would enhance solidarity and outcomes, but in some circumstances, such as the availability of funds, it may not be viable to have separate organisations. However, in this case there is a risk of placing women's participation under the control of men (Schneider and Libercier, 1985b). Cornwall (2003) argues that although it might be necessary to open up space for women's voices by installing them in the existing committees, this may not be enough if female participants are not concerned about other women, or their perceptions and concerns are not valued by male members.

Furthermore, Evans (2003) notes that any set of organisations includes power relations, which entail a distribution of gains and losses. This means that there is a possibility of emergence of conflict, which requires an understanding of the socio-economic environment and adopting dialogue and negotiations.

The next section presents the findings of studies, which deal with various issues in relation to non-governmental organisations.

### ***Non-Governmental Organisations: Practical Experiences***

Based on analysis of 150 organisations from across the developing World, Uphoff (1991:496) summarised the characteristics of local organisations that enable them to function beneficially. Informal modes of operation were generally more successful than more formal ones, because local people were unfamiliar with such formal proceedings; the performance was better when decision-making was shared between the executive committees (or many committees) and general assembly of all members; horizontal links with similar organisations and vertical links with organisations above and below created better performance and more stability; and the size of the organisation was not a significant factor in determining the level of success. Brohman (1996:265-66) asserts that people only find themselves in a truly participatory organisation when they share common concerns and volunteer to act collectively.

A study of perceptions on participation, which involved 230 governmental and non-governmental organisations in Africa, found that people usually participate in planning and implementation, while monitoring and evaluation is conducted by outsiders (Guijt, 1991).

The Wasteland Development Programme in India, through Social Action for Rural and Tribal Inhabitants, supported a group formation for women as a mechanism to strengthen the political voice of women within local organisations. These groups succeeded in obtaining tenurial rights to common land for women's groups. It also provided a base for women to challenge the gender division of labour at home and in society. Studies showed that, as a result of these groups' efforts, men started to help in household chores while women were working on the wastelands (Weekes-Vagliani, 1995:67).

Fernando (1995:177) in his case study about one of the Sri Lankan NGO experiences in the field of participatory development at grassroots level, differentiates between two types of persons who could be identified as leaders: firstly, the village leader who leads the

community on an ideological basis and receives respect in return. A person like this mobilises resources, including human resources for community purposes. Secondly, village brokers who negotiate resource flows from outside the village and have knowledge about how this system operates.

Oxfam implemented Kebkabiya Food Security Project in North Darfur in Sudan in 1987 which was focused on building seed banks (Cornwall, 2003). It has been noticed that men made all community decisions while women's contribution was initially limited to helping to build seed banks. Oxfam decided to address gender issues by hiring two female coordinators, whose task was to represent women's concerns to the management committee and encourage women's participation in the project. Local women had been encouraged to form their own committees. Oxfam's strategy was based on working separately with the women, and then to try to persuade the men of the value of involving women in their committees, with the aim that women can develop confidence and after being involved in male-run committees can speak out and address their concerns. After that women started to ask for practical help and support for some generating activities such as poultry raising and handicrafts. Oxfam refused to respond to women's requests, because they worried that these forms of activities would support the traditional gender roles and hence reinforce gender inequality rather than empowering them (Cornwall, 2003). According to Cornwall, Kabkabiya women's needs and interests were not taken into account because the NGO policy contradicted with participants' interests. Cornwall (2003) explained that Oxfam, despite their commitment to participation, is guided by their own objectives, which they believed to be in the women's interest. On the other hand, based on long working experience as development worker in Sudan, Osman (2002:24) asserts that development organisations should not be surprised if they face resistance to such interventions, especially in communities with strict gendered codes of behavior. Reflecting on Oxfam's experiences in Sudan, Osman (2002:23) asserts that the main challenge facing development organisations is that gender-sensitive poverty eradication policies and strategies are context-specific.

Hailey (2001) explores the development approaches, which were adopted by South Asian NGOs through case studies that included nine organisations in three countries, Bangladesh, India and Pakistan. The study revealed that the organisations invest their time in building personal relationships with the communities and networks of trusting relationships between

staff and local people. One of the key elements in the success of these NGOs is their leaders' commitment to social justice and helping the rural poor and by having a clear vision of how they can contribute to local development. Hailey concludes that the South Asian NGOs successfully adopted informal approaches to participatory processes, which was dependent on personal interaction. This was based on personal criteria, such as trust, respect and friendship. Hailey (2001:89) finds that the participation of the local community in the NGOs' programmes came easily and naturally as a result of highly personalised interaction between the NGOs' staff and the communities. These NGOs' staff had engaged with, and listened to the community in an unstructured and informal manner. The NGOs presented three justifications for not using the formulaic participatory techniques and tools such as, PRA: 1) such approaches are operationally inappropriate and have practical limitations; 2) the cultural context and local circumstances are more conducive to informal and personalised methods than to the functional and formulaic approach; 3) formal approaches are seen as alien techniques that are imposed by outsiders to promote certain values or political agendas.

Mosse (2001) examined the experience of the Kribhco Indo-British Farming Project (KRIBP) in India, which was managed by an NGO and government. KRIBP has focused on improving the livelihoods of poor farming families through a PRA-based process. Mosse showed that local knowledge made no contribution to planning processes. Instead what was presented as local needs was actually shaped by local perceptions of what development organisations were expected to deliver. Mosse (2001:19) finds that PRA events in KRIBP produced knowledge that is strongly shaped by local relations of power, authority and gender. In other words it was shaped by locally dominant groups and by project interests (Mosse, 2001: 23). Mosse (2001:19) attributed this to the nature of PRA and its open-endedness. This suggests that local knowledge might not modify project models.

Recent studies on participatory development have started to focus on cultural and social aspects. Kassam (2002) presents the experiences of an NGO of the indigenous Oromo people (Hundee) of Central Ethiopia. Hundee decided to protect its distinct entity and to pursue development based on translating their traditional views into modern-day development practices. It adopted strategies aimed at enabling communities to understand the cause of their problems and how to solve them. Hundee focused on informing people of their rights and duties within the framework of the Ethiopian constitution and as a consequence

considerable achievements were made and changes occurred in Oromo life. The study of Ethiopian Hundee is an important work for understanding the influence of local values in mobilising communities.

The formation and performance of local organisations or grassroots organisations might be confronted by considerable challenges and constraints. Fernando (1995) explains that familiarity with an external system, how it functions, and how it could be addressed, may also stand as a challenge for all grassroots organisations. Thomas (1994) asserts that even if the establishment of voluntary organisations were based on communication and full participation, people who have a strong character will find a way to dominate. In general, a decision-making process within a community may be affected by age, gender, class, and caste or on other ground (ODA, 1995). Cleaver (2001) supports this view. The author argues that formation of local organisations and setting criteria for their members does not mean that exclusion, vulnerability, and subordination are overcome, because conditions and relations are shaped by some structural factors that are left untouched.

The practices of participatory development have faced various constraints, which definitely influence the outcomes of its interventions. The following section briefly outlines these constraints.

### **Factors which influenced People's Participation**

Theoretically the concept of participation is linked to alternative development programmes, but in practice it is tightly controlled, either by the state or the urban and rural elite groups (Rahnema, 1992). McGee (2002) argues that in practice there is a kind of invisible disagreement among the decision makers on which stage within the project cycle participation should occur and the extent to which participation should determine project inputs and activities.

Development projects are assumed to contribute to social changes in societies. However, they may not benefit all people equally, some people will gain more and some may lose from the process (ODA, 1995). Black (1991:152) argues that primary beneficiaries of rural development programmes are the cities as development funds mainly settle where offices are built and maintained, supplies are purchased, and salaries are earned and spent. Brohman

(1996) asserts that if care is not taken, bottom-up development initiatives may result in more inequality in terms of resource distribution and decision-making among local groups.

Cernea (1991) points to the risk of development projects being controlled by external influences, such as donors and/or implementing agencies. Bagadion and Kortton (1991:73) argue that development agencies usually have norms, procedures, policies and attitudes, which offer little support to build people's capabilities. Development agencies are seen to be responsible for the persistent problem of limited participation, which is due to the way they operate and to staffing that make genuine participatory approaches difficult or even impossible to apply (Schneider and Libercier, 1995b: 48). Therefore they may fail to achieve their declared aim of empowering communities (Neefjes, 2000).

At present, international organisations, donors and government are sharing a growing interest in participatory approaches. Blackburn and Holland (1998:1) assert that as these approaches become institutionalised, new challenges have emerged and need to be addressed. These challenges include the organisational reforms and changing of professionals, and bureaucrats' behaviour. Hildyard and others (2001:70) explain that if national and international development agencies are truly serious about the issues of sustainability, equity, and poverty reduction, they should give priority to the needs and political development of marginalised and oppressed groups. Hildyard and others propose that development agencies need to examine their internal hierarchies, training techniques, and office culture, which are essential to support receptivity, flexibility, patience, open-mindedness, non-defensiveness, curiosity, and respect for 'others' opinions (Hildyard et al., 2001). Freire (1970:135) contends that if the conditions, which dominate a project, are authoritarian, rigid, and dominant this will maintain an exclusive environment. In fact, the success in participatory development projects depends on donors' and implementing agencies' readiness to adopt a process approach and delegate clearly defined responsibilities and decision making power to local stakeholders (Eylers and Foster, 1998), as well as involving different related institutions as partner organisations.

Ladbury and Eyben (1995) identified four reasons for beneficiaries' lack of participation in development decisions that affect them: economic, politic, professionalism, and the nature of the products. Regarding economic issues, Ladbury and Eyben (1995:194) argue that there is a strong individually based economic rationale for collective action. On the other hand,

politically, participation would be limited if the beneficiaries lack the power to organise and get themselves fairly represented. Professionalism is also seen as a barrier for participation as the culture of some sector specialists, such as health does not encourage participation (ODA, 1995:97).

Narayan (1995) studied the communities' involvement in 121 rural water supply projects in 49 countries implemented by the World Bank. The study demonstrated that participation contributed to project effectiveness and encouraged a sense of empowerment (1995:1). It showed that a development agency's responsiveness to communities was influencing stakeholders' participation. The study suggested that people's involvement in stages prior to implementation would influence their commitment to a project (Narayan, 1995:2). The study (1995:53) revealed that the degree of a community's organisation has an influence on the level and quality of people's participation.

- ✓ Some development agencies analysed their participatory development experiences and tried to identify obstacles that affected their efforts. The World Bank (2001a:3) identified the following constraints to participation in its projects during the period 1994-1998: government's skepticism about participatory approaches; government agencies lack of capacity to engage in participation; and communities' lack of training and technical knowledge.
- .. Participation also depends on availability and distribution of resources, and access to assets and rights. If the communities are well organised and motivated their capability may be reduced by several limitations such as inadequacy of resources and the structural frame of local institutions (Cleaver, 2001). Fernando (1995:183) suggests that promoters of participatory development should keep their projects limited to ensure that the resources that reach groups can make significant changes in their lives.
- ° Participation theorists caution that 'participation' might lead to more exclusion of powerless groups and individuals. Development interventions have been accused of being controlled by specific powerful groups or individuals and primary development stakeholders are treated as passive beneficiaries. Moreover, in some societies powerless people have been dominated for a long time by powerful elite groups, and have been overtaken by the mentality of independence, which reduced their capability to act and make their own decisions, while

those who enjoyed the power and status are opposed the change (Freire, 1970; Mathur, 1995). Participatory development authors (Uphoff, 1991:492; Mathur, 1995:160; Brohman, 1996; Rudqvist and Woodford-Berger, 1996; Simon and Narman, 1999) argue that through the bottom-up development efforts there is a possibility that elite groups might monopolise project benefits or that field-officers and project leaders might align themselves with some community groups against the interests of the poor, leading to limited or negative outcomes of development interventions. Well-informed and powerful individuals may influence the process of allocation and distribution of aid (Fernando, 1995).

The bureaucratic rigidity and conventional system applied by development agencies also hindered people's participation (Mathur, 1995). According to Schneider and Libercier (1995b), experiences showed that application of participatory approaches by development organisations was constrained by many factors. For example, behavior of development staff was guided by incentive and many of them did not understand the rationale for participatory strategies in projects. Other examples were time and disbursement pressure and adopting a blue print approach rather than a process approach.

Claims of full participation and empowerment through participatory development could be driven by particular gender interests, leaving the powerless without a chance to exercise their voices or much choice (Cornwall, 2003:25). Morrisson and Jütting (2005:1065) found that social institutions, which refer to laws, norms, traditions, and codes of conduct that have existed in societies for centuries, are the most important single factor determining women's participation in economic activities outside the household. They (2005:1080) also found that gender inequalities in participation in economic activities are generally higher in Muslim and Hindu dominated countries compared with Christian and Buddhist countries. However, there are important exceptions. This suggests that within the dominant religions, various interpretations and applications regarding the economic role of women are possible. Morrisson's and Jütting's (2005) findings suggest that even in settings that are influenced by culture, religion, or economic roles, changes in favour of women are possible.

Having outlined the main factors that influenced the outcomes of people's participation in development the following section summaries and concludes the chapter.



## Summary and Conclusion

Many analysts argue that the concept of participation in development planning, policymaking and decision sharing has been prominent in documents but has not percolated into practice. Repeatedly, participatory development has been criticised for not dealing with issues of power and politics while focusing only on technical matters, aiming to 'achieve more' rather than empowering people. It has been argued that if alternative development strategies are to achieve their objectives and the local poor be genuinely empowered. Fundamental changes to the status quo and the distribution of power among local people are required not just some scattered reforms (Brohman, 1996). The main issue here is how and in what form people will participate (Gerrit, 1997:2). Moreover, there is concern about the behaviours of the professionals and the development providers' policies. It is believed that to empower people, donors and development agencies need to have a clear vision, comprehensive experiences, and a strong belief in participatory concepts.

Non-governmental organisations, international or national, are viewed as the key actors in participatory development. Various practical experiences have been presented which highlight that local NGOs have adopted various approaches and dealt with development issues from their own perspectives.

Previous participatory development experiences suggest that people's participation could be affected by external influences, and internal solidarity and conflict within communities. Moreover, the alternative development approach has focused on local knowledge as a source of information and participation as a way for people to speak out. In practice the roles, strengths, and essence of indigenous participative organisations and practices are rarely explored and utilised in current development interventions.

People's contributions to development, and their locally participative ways and practices, have been ignored under the dominance of state-led and market-driven approaches. Participatory development studies and practices focused on economic factors and were rarely concerned about combining the cultural and political aspects. Empirical studies that draw findings from studying local settings and local people's perceptions are very limited. Moreover, Participation literature focused on participatory approaches that were invented or

adopted by NGOs and development agencies. At the same time they neglected the indigenous participative organisations, approaches, and practices that play an important role in achieving economic, social and human development for Third World people in their local settings. There were participative values, organisations and practices that were supported by social norms but were neither explored or reflected in the literature, nor analysed and utilised by external development providers.

Despite the long time-frame since the emergence of participation as a prominent feature in alternative development, it appears that studies on the nature and impact of participatory development interventions and approaches is limited in African countries and are absent in Sudan.

In this context the research in Chapter Seven (the major case study) explores and analyses the indigenous participative structures and mechanisms together with newly established ones. This aims to offer better understanding of the local setting and suggest practical ways for enhancing the outcomes of participatory development interventions.

The following chapter will present the methods used in this study to approach people and other resources.

## **Chapter Four: Research Methods and Fieldwork Experience**

### **Introduction**

This study focused on exploring the nature and potential of participatory approaches employed by development providers in the North Kordofan Rural Development Project (NKRDP) and the White Nile Agricultural Services Project (WNASP) and understanding how primary stakeholders interact. It explored the views and perceptions of development academics, planners and specialists as well as civil society activists who are concerned with development issues and have or are assumed to have connections with local communities and development agencies.

The purpose of this chapter is to provide a description of the researcher fieldwork experiences and explain the research design and data collection methods. The chapter starts by describing the conditions that influenced the selection of the case studies and conduct of the fieldwork, continuing on by introducing the research participants and describing the data collection methods along with analysis and reporting processes. Further, this chapter presents the ethical issues and outlines the limitations of the study and concludes with a brief summary.

### ***Case Study Strategy***

The plan for the research project is based on case study design. According to Yin (2003:13) a case study is an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident. Most writings on case study agree that the case study approach is based on a great wealth of empirical knowledge (Hamel et al., 1991:45) and has proven to be in harmony with the following three words: 'describing, understanding and explaining' (Hamel et al., 1991:39). Case study is much like 'detective work with everything weighed and sifted, checked or corroborated' (Gillham, 2000:30). Case study is also appropriate when there is a need to understand a complex social phenomenon such as participation, 'when' 'how' and 'why' questions are being posed and when 'we have limited control over actual behavioral events' (Yin, 2003:1-2). Using a case study as a strategy offered an in-depth description and

explanation of many components of participatory development processes. The case study involved several units of analysis such as project management and staff, implementing agencies, local communities and their grassroots organisations, national and regional NGOs and local government institutions. According to Yin (2003:43) dealing with several units in one case study results in what is called 'an embedded case study'. Using a case study as a research strategy to investigate the participatory processes within the selected development projects has helped me, along with the participants, to identify factors that influenced the extent and quality of participation and therefore the development processes. The case study also offered an opportunity to elicit the meanings of local participatory values, and intentions and roles of local participatory organisations and practices, and to identify ways through which participatory development practices may be improved.

I chose Sudan in which to conduct the fieldwork as I am originally Sudanese and have had previous work experiences with many development agencies, government and local NGOs in Sudan. To explore the participatory concepts and practices within the project management and administration framework as well as inter-agency links and local communities, I needed to get access to projects and interact with local communities. Arrangements and contacts were established to obtain permission from local authorities, implementing agencies and project's management. I sought permission to become part of the project environments, especially in the field, that enabled me access to unrestricted information from their internal monitoring system. Prior to the fieldwork I made direct contact with many international development agencies, such as the FAO, IFAD, CARE, USAID and the World Bank. The only ongoing projects since the mid 1990s were implemented by IFAD, which fortunately expressed interest in the research topic and directed me to their Central Coordination Unit (IFAD-CCU) in Khartoum. IFAD-CCU gave permission and indicated interest in my being a researcher at the project sites. It also confirmed their acceptance and interest of local communities and government institutions. It was a great relief to obtain that permission, as there are a very limited number of development projects in Sudan as development agencies withdrew from Sudan in the early 1990s, claiming that the government supported terrorism and/or would not cooperate with international financing institutions.

IFAD-CCU also provided me with electronic material concerning their operating projects. I reviewed this material and chose the North Kordofan Rural Development Project (NKRDP) to conduct my research. The selection of the NKRDP has been influenced by the following

factors: availability of development projects that could offer a case for exploring and studying participatory development processes in a real setting; and obtaining permission from local authorities and the implementing agencies who are primary actors in these processes. The NKRDP has extensive working experience in comparison to other projects. Its local communities represent a majority of the Sudanese ethnic groups and it has had diverse experience with aid and international development organisations since the mid 1980s. I accessed the websites of IFAD and the NKRDP and downloaded the evaluation mission report, which was released in 2003 (IFAD, 2004). All this documented material was carefully examined, particularly those that focused on participation.

While I was in the field, IFAD-CCU, and many other development specialists and academics suggested that I visit and explore some aspects and experiences of The White Nile Agricultural Services Project (WNASP) that was implemented by IFAD from 1996 to 2001. When the project was phased out in 2001 its assets were handed over to the Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Resources and Irrigation (MAAI) in the White Nile State. IFAD-CCU claimed that the present IFAD projects benefited from the WNASP experiences while others viewed the WNASP as an example of how development projects usually collapse after the withdrawal of donors and implementing agencies. While I was conducting the fieldwork in the NKRDP the Forests National Corporation (my former employer) facilitated permission from the MAAI and local authorities in the White Nile State to visit the WNASP sites and meet and interview the professionals, local leaders and participants. The WNASP offered a different case study located in an irrigated agricultural scheme, contrasting the rain-fed farming communities in North Kordofan State. It also offered an opportunity to study and explore the dynamics of power within irrigated schemes where farmers' organisations are perceived as semi-formal organisations that have resources, links, and relationships with government authorities. I believed that by adding this case study we would broaden our understanding of the Sudanese context and create some degree of generalisation since there are some similarities between the two cases and the rest of the regions in terms of development interventions and the prevailing cultural and socio-economic conditions. The Forests National Corporation (FNC) had also offered to provide me with accommodation, transportation, and a female extension officer who had worked with the WNASP before joining the FNC, to accompany me to various schemes (villages). After reviewing the WNASP's reports I decided to study the community development component, as it focused on local people's needs and claimed to adopt participatory approaches. The experiences of

the WNASP will be presented in Chapter Six to clarify different situations and illustrate people's experience with phased out project.

### *Useful Events*

Spending the first two weeks in Khartoum was extremely useful. It enabled me to meet and talk to many people. I conducted a series of focus group discussions and semi-structured interviews with IFAD coordination unit staff, some government officials, academics at the Institute of Research and Development Studies (IRDS) and Faculty of Agriculture, University of Khartoum, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and members of civil society organisations. I also reviewed some relevant material from the universities and specialised institutes at the University of Khartoum, such as the Institute of Asian and African Studies (IAAS) and IRDS. Useful material was obtained from UNDP and Sudan libraries, Federal Rule Chamber and the Gender Center for Research and Training (GCRT). I was provided with some documents and reports of the NKRDP and the WNASP from IFAD-CCU and MAAI at Kordofan and the White Nile States.

I had the opportunity to attend two national workshops. Immediately on arriving in Sudan I was informed by a friend that a two-day workshop would be organised by the Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry and an invitation was extended for me to attend. The workshop was organised in response to an international organisations' interest in resuming its activities in Sudan and requesting project proposals. The workshop aimed to present and assess previous experiences of some development agencies such as the World Bank, Danish International Development Agency (DANIDA), and United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and SOS Sahel International/ United Kingdom, which withdrew its programmes in the early 1990s. This workshop was attended by academics, NGOs activists and development practitioners who had working experience with development projects. They gathered to present the lessons learned and offer suggestions for future projects. The objective was to help the Ministry prepare project proposals that would be funded by government and international organisations. The second workshop was organised by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), which asked civil society organisations to reflect on the millennium development goals. This workshop opened avenues for me to meet and listen to NGOs and journalists debate about the role of national NGOs and acquire greater knowledge of current civil society movements and development trends in Sudan.

Both occasions offered a valuable opportunity to meet many research participants who expressed their interest in my research topic and provided me with many ideas and information, identifying many other resource persons and institutions.

While I was in North Kordofan state (NKS) one of the North Kordofan NGOs organised a regional one-day seminar in *El-Obeid* (the capital of NKS) in collaboration with UNDP. The seminar was attended by international development agencies and regional non-governmental organisations that work in NKS. Given the chance to attend that seminar provided me with valuable information regarding the regional NGOs in the area, the scope and nature of their work, and the relationships between these organisations, grassroots organisations, government institutions and the NKRDP.

The fieldwork required an extensive knowledge of the historical and cultural background of the research sites and phenomenon under study. For this reason considerable time was spent reviewing and examining the relevant literature at the Institute of Development Studies and Research, and the Institute of Asian and African Studies at the University of Khartoum. The professional staff and academics at the two centers offered their support and suggestions. During this time I conducted a pilot study that was followed by two focus interviews and two focus group discussions. These were with academics who had significant knowledge and experience with development agencies and projects.

### ***Pilot Studies***

A number of pilot interviews were conducted in order to test the questions and the structured interviews. Piloting aimed to find out if the interview questions were clear and easy and whether the length of the interviews and their findings could generate too much or irrelevant information (Wadsworth, 1997:52). Three volunteers from Forests National Corporation with previous experience of participatory development projects completed the questionnaire. Two other development specialists from the Institute of Research and Development Studies, University of Khartoum also volunteered to participate in semi-structured interviews. Through these pilot studies the volunteers were able to represent the real projects' staff, development planners and specialists. This piloting aimed to find out if the questions were clear and were able to produce the required information. The participants were encouraged to

criticise and comment on the questions and their discussions were recorded and used to decide the correct choice and arrangement of words in the questionnaire.

Through the pilot an interview timeframe was estimated and a quick analysis of the pilot results was carried out in order to assess the outcomes and to discover any ideas that may be worth incorporating into the main research (Schofield, 1969). Some issues that turned out to be critical in dealing with people's participation had not been addressed in any depth or even referred to in the designed questions. The first issue was related to the projects' communication channels when approaching rural communities; the pilot participants showed concern about projects' initial approach when communicating with local communities. It appears that to ensure local community participation we must be sure about approaching the community through the correct channels otherwise we may end up creating conflicts and/or excluding some people, while further empowering those who already have power. Another issue is the need for in-depth exploration of local participatory organisations and practices. It seems that these organisations have a crucial role in sustaining local livelihoods and may influence the externally imposed development interventions. The participants of the pilot studies proposed more emphasis and in-depth analysis of these issues.

After two weeks in Khartoum, I accompanied the NKRDP staff to North Kordofan State where the NKRDP is implemented. The project is located in the centre of Sudan on the way to the Western region. It was an eight hour drive from Khartoum, passing along the White Nile towards the south before crossing the Nile and heading west to *El-Obeid*, the capital of NKS. During the trip a comprehensive discussion with the project staff provided useful information about the project's participants and nature of the work, which saved much time and introduced some thoughts about my fieldwork plans. Being at the projects' sites from July to November was a perfect time for conducting the fieldwork in North Kordofan and the White Nile States. This period of the year offered an opportunity to meet the seasonal migrants (almost all young men) who return to their villages during the rainy season to do the farming work and join their families which concludes by harvesting and selling the products during November/December. Those migrants normally leave the villages and go to the cities to work during the dry season from January to June in order to support their families. Chambers (1983: 13/20-21) points out that rural poverty cannot be observed if fieldwork or visits are conducted during a time, for example the dry season, when social problems are less



common. Chambers (1983:20) refers to researchers who avoid the wet season in order to escape related difficulties. For this reason, the Overseas Development Administration (ODA, 1995) prefers to reduce the seasonal bias by insisting that visits to rural areas should be made during the wet season. My field experience showed that avoiding or choosing particular times of the year for visits should also consider the accessibility of information and the objectives of fieldwork and field visits, as opposed to insisting on a particular time to avoid personal difficulties or seasonal bias. The question is when is the most suitable time to get access to information and its sources? Is it the dry or wet season? This requires obtaining suitable information before starting the fieldwork, so the most suitable time may be when there are fewer or no difficulties.

In January 2005 the government signed a peace agreement with the Southern military movement ending the longest civil war in Africa, which had lasted for fifty years. As a result of this agreement all major development agencies, such as the World Bank and other international NGOs resumed their activities in Sudan. These changes also offered some opportunities to attend workshops and meetings that were organised by different international and national institutions in order to review the current development challenges and to assess the experience of previous development programmes and projects. During the last two years, Sudan has witnessed a great revolution in mobile telephone technology covering most of the rural areas. Surprisingly even illiterate people in remote rural areas were fully aware of this technology and have learnt how to use it, which challenged me as I was always seeking help, having never used a mobile phone before. In Sudan people in general are not very punctual and need to be reminded of their appointments, therefore having this new technology assisted in confirming and reminding participants of our appointments. In Sudan where public transport between villages could be problematic, setting times for interviews and finding people where they are supposed to be could be quite difficult. The mobile phone was a timesaver in these circumstances.

### *Sudanese Settings*

The Sudanese people, especially in the villages, enjoy talking in informal settings. Social interactions between people and talking to each other and / or talking to outsiders are always a special joy. People always engage in conversation and discussion of different topics. Having many friends and previous colleagues in some government institutions has facilitated

field visits and offered information about different institutions, NGOs and individuals who might have some knowledge or information to offer. The existence of universities and research institutions in the NKRDP site has provided me with opportunities to access more resources.

In general people are not concerned about individual privacy; any one will provide you with the phone numbers of those whom he/she thinks could be of use. People never get upset if you turn up without a previous appointment or arrangement. While I was interviewing one of the key government officers I discovered that he was supposed to be chairing a meeting with a community organisation. I suggested that I wait until he was finished or we could set another time, but he refused and insisted I finish the interview while the others waited for him. This has happened many times, which explains why people find it hard to be punctual or precise with time management.

At village level some social practices such as *Nafir* (mobilisation) and coffee groups were an open space for participation and mixing with people through many valuable and enjoyable events. Through these I gained an intimate knowledge of the local organisations, values, and morals of participatory practices. I developed a manageable and flexible scope during the fieldwork, making use of all the opportunities and listening to those who were interested in talking to me. I entered the field with some knowledge and some ignorance, so proceeded with sensitivity gained from my previous learning, aware of my role as a participant observer.

### ***Living in the Rural Settings***

The NKRDP facilitated the transport between towns and villages when it was difficult to find public transport during the rainy season, not only because the roads were inaccessible, but also the people were busy on their farms so rarely traveled. The NKRDP also provided the accommodation in the large cities (*El-Obeid, Bara and Um-Ruwaba*) where I spent some time with the field staff.

The communities in the NKRDP sites (*Bara and Um-Ruwaba* localities) are from the same ethnic background. Sometimes there is one tribe in a village, but usually there are a combination of tribes in each village, normally living in harmony and mixing with each other

through marriages and social relations. The communities in general share similar socio-economic and political settings. Because of strong social and blood relations people are continuously moving within their local communities. People in each village have extensive knowledge about other villages, the problems they have, who visits them and what kind of relationship they have with the state government and external development agencies. In general there are no significant variations between villages in terms of ethnicity and socio-economic status.

Someone like me who has no relatives or friends in the area is seen as a village guest, so everyone who had a visitors' room offered to have me stay in their house. Early in the morning women from the neighbouring houses would bring their morning tea to share with the family who hosted me. It was then my day and work began. The members of Village Development Organisations (VDOs), schoolteachers and the host families contributed by contacting the participants, organising the group discussions and/or accompanying me to my destination. Everyone was pleased to help. There were no rules or conditions that could restrict my movements and communication with anyone at anytime. Due to intensive interaction between people in the villages it was very easy to meet many people from other communities who were on the move, either on their farms or while they were visiting friends, relatives or participating in social events.

Staying with people in their villages, joining them while working on their farms, in their kitchens and when gathering to drink coffee created a sense of ease for everyone. People felt free to express their views and ideas and shared personal experiences. Living among rural villagers helped me gain first-hand insights into people's perceptions, values and motives that influence their participation in development interventions and enabled all of us to analyse and investigate ways of enhancing the outcomes of the participatory processes. Women normally gather to drink coffee in groups, mostly with relatives, friends and neighbours. They share ingredients, talk, exchange news, and discuss general topics. Coffee groups hold more significance than just drinking coffee together; they are a place for relaxation and reflection, and an inspiring venue for storytellers and poets. Some productive ideas and proposals such as saving fund activities are normally discussed and carried from there. It was useful to utilise some existing groups to meet many people. The groups are already in place and meet at a time that suits their members. The existence of these groups offered a chance to conduct

focus group discussions, although joint focus group discussions were also held for both men and women. Before discussing the research topic we always engaged in friendly and general discussion about village life and some social issues.

People expressed great pleasure at my presence amongst them. They expressed their interest in my previous work experiences, my home village in the Gazira Scheme in Sudan and my life in New Zealand. On the last day with each community we organised an evening gathering to present my findings and to have a final open discussion. Comments from participants were used for making corrections and editing. This practice proved to be useful in validating the research findings.

Staying in the project (NKRDP) premises encouraged the field staff to open up and talk honestly about their experiences, successes, failures, hopes and frustrations. However, the senior staff, both management and technical, were a little reserved and focused on presenting the positive aspects. This is understandable considering the senior staff were employed by IFAD while the field staff were government employees who worked temporarily for the project. Attending meetings between the NKRDP and Village Development Organisations (VDOs) and local communities in many villages provided me with further knowledge about the project's approaches, inputs and shortcomings. It reflected the locals' perceptions about the project's interventions. Meetings were normally held at night when everyone had finished work, out in the open air using large gas lamps.

The process of data collection was a unique life experience, I completely enjoyed being among a wide range of research participants, each one of them a treasure to know and listen to. During the fieldwork I had the opportunity to travel from the capital to the White Nile State and North Kordofan State and observe the differences between rural and urban participants and between cities and villages in terms of social life, services and facilities, as well as in people's perceptions and views.

Having described the conditions that influenced the selection of case studies and fieldwork experiences the next section provides a description of the research participants and various research methods.

## **General Framework**

This research is inductive and essentially employs a qualitative enquiry approach. This approach enabled me to explore complexities in a realistic context that would not be evident when using a controlled approach. According to Gillham (2000:11) it explained situations where prior knowledge was limited and viewed the case from the 'inside out' as perceived by those who were involved. Some of the research questions have generated quantitative data such as the extent of participation in various activities and training outputs, while some questions have focused on people's perceptions and values. Different participatory methods have been used to explore the participatory processes, approaches, and people's values and perceptions. Before leaving the projects' sites summaries of research findings were discussed with the NKRDP management, IFAD-CCU and community representatives.

## ***Research Participants***

The research participants either had knowledge of participation in development (Dhamotharan, 1998:9) or were either excluded by or involved in the projects' activities and willing to talk (Appendix 4.1). With the help of the NKRDP staff, government institutions in the White Nile State, grassroots organisations and specialists, a number of individuals and groups were identified and invited to participate. Seven villages were selected in the NKRDP for conducting in-depth research; this selection was based on villages' responses and the degree of their involvement in the project's interventions. Two schemes in the WNASP were selected.

Within the communities at national and local levels there are local specialists who have extensive knowledge of various subjects related to the research topic (Dhamotharan, 1998). These 'specialists' have provided valuable information regarding indigenous participatory practices, concepts, and beliefs, along with their historical background. These specialists explained how communities responded in cases of drought, famine and fire crises.

Local 'participation champions' (World Bank, 2001a: 3) from Popular Development Works (PDW) who initiated some participatory programmes and activities in the NKRDP sites were

also interviewed in order to explore their policies and perceptions and examine the NKRDP approach when dealing with regional and national NGOs.

The research participants reacted spontaneously with excitement, full of enthusiasm to share their problems, hopes and experiences of the development projects, government institutions and NGOs. They enjoyed telling stories from the past and the present. Many participants, especially in the villages, have the ability to record these experiences as poetry. This could explain how people were able to recollect in detail many events, even when they occurred before they were born.

### **Reaching the Inaccessible**

Realizing that some people are more accessible than others (Gillham, 2000) raised my awareness of potentially inaccessible individuals or groups. The basic assumption in any participatory development programme is that the proposed initiatives are targeting the poor. This was both expressed and implied in the NKRDP and the WNASP documents. Many authors point out that the poor and marginalised groups, in most cases, are hard to reach (Gillham, 2000; Chambers, 1997). For the purpose of this research, reaching the inaccessible groups was a crucial condition in order to obtain evidence and information from those who should be the target of development projects and from whom development should seek true participation. It appeared that the poorest among the poor were not participating and they were usually absent from the projects' meetings and/or activities. During one of the NKRDP's meetings (Field notes, 08/2005-*Bara 2*), which was planned for the discussion of the lack of women's participation in the Agricultural Bank of Sudan's credit programme, a female widow with seven children raised a vital point in saying that 'some people like me, who are not able to pay the *Sandug* fees, have been excluded even from the village revolving fund, how can they expect me to approach the bank'? This gave an indication of some forms of exclusion and directed my attention to those people who had been deprived of such development opportunities.

### ***The Sampling Frame***

Sampling is the way to ensure that any techniques used for collecting data are obtaining an accurate representation of people within the population (Wadsworth, 1997). Sample size is seen as an important issue in dealing with the reliability of quantitative research, while it is less critical when dealing with qualitative research (Babbie, 1990). The sampling procedures

and instruments used for case studies employ the same method that is used in regular surveys (Yin, 2003). The sampling frame available for this study was the list of the projects stakeholders and staff, members of community grassroots organisations (GROs) and government officials as well as other identified participants from outside the project, such as academics, planners and members of NGOs.

**Table 4.1: Data Collection Modes**

Site	Data collection method					Participants	Institutions / Sites
	SI	SSI	FI	FGD	PRAs		
Khartoum		5	5	6		IFAD Coordinator, Projects staff, Specialists, Politicians, Academics, Journalists, Teachers and activists.	IFAD-CCU, GCRT, IRDS UK, MAAI, FNC, FRC, Friedrich Ebert Foundation, MFLF International Relief, ARC, ABS/FCB El-Obeid and Kosti, Care International And UNDP.
El-Obeid	4	9	3	1			
Kosti		5	2				
Ganfaria and Ahamda		10		6		Local leaders, Villagers.	WNASP, Irrigated Agricultural schemes.
Bara Locality	8	12	2	8	12	Project staff, non- participants, Members of GROs and VDOs.	NKRDP, three villages in Bara and four villages in Um-Ruwaba.
Um-Ruwaba Locality	8	18	3	12	18		
<b>Total</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>59</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>30</b>		

**SI:** Structured interview.      **SSI:** Semi-structured interview.      **FI:** Focus interview  
**FGD:** Focus group discussions.      **PRAs:** Participatory Rural Appraisal sessions.

The non-random sampling represents the main frame for the survey, which was found to be useful in an exploratory study by utilising a purposive sampling design. The selection of those who have been interviewed, such as the project staff, representatives of implementing agencies, members of GROs and the poorest members of the community excluded by the projects, was made according to 'known characteristics' (May, 1997:119). The members of

GROs, such as education, religious and popular committees; and women's groups, such as coffee groups that include women from different categories both rich and poor, along with project participants and non-participants were also interviewed through focus group discussions.

Employing the snowball sampling technique has assisted in finding and contacting the initial participants and according to the scope and focus of the study lead to the participation of others (May, 1997; Overton and van Diermen, 2003). This technique was extremely helpful in reaching potential participants who were selected according to their knowledge, experiences, involvement and influence on participatory development processes. It also helped in approaching and interviewing those who were not included on the NKRDP's list. The data collection process was continued until it appeared that no further information could be obtained meaning that the size of the sample was only known on completion of the fieldwork. Table 4.1 shows the final sample size by sites, methods, participants and institutions.

The NKRDP has adopted the same approaches and implemented the same activities in all the villages it has worked in. It has been indicated that there were some villages that responded immediately after being approached by the project, while some had resisted the project's approaches and took a long time to become fully involved. Out of two villages that applied to be involved in the project and agreed to the project conditions; one (*Um-Ruwaba 4*) was selected together with six others in which to conduct an in-depth investigation. The villages were grouped according to their responses and socio-economic status as a basis for making the final selection. Some villages were selected randomly from the identified categories and some were chosen because of specific conditions, such as *Um-Ruwaba 2*, where the community was identified by the project as a highly motivated and self-dependant village.

The WNASP was implemented in twenty-four agricultural schemes in the White Nile State. The project employed similar approaches and interventions in all the schemes, with a large similarity in terms of socio-economic and environmental conditions. All the schemes have the same local organisations with the only significant difference between them being the population structure; some being homogenous in terms of tribal identity while others are heterogeneous. Based on the population structure the schemes were divided into two



categories (homogenous and heterogeneous) and one from each category was randomly selected to explore the participatory development experiences of the WNASP.

Having introduced the research participants the next section describes the data collection techniques.

### ***Selection of Research Methods***

To explore the various elements and factors that shape and influence people's participation in community development and hence in projects' interventions requires a selection of appropriate methods, dependent on the subject of the study, the context of the research and the kind of information being explored. Based on this view, the qualitative methods have been considered as the main approach. Although the study is of a highly qualitative nature, a great deal of statistical data was gathered from the documentary sources and through other field methods, such as wellbeing ranking and historical profiles.

The data was collected from different sources, both secondary and primary, and by using various methods. By reviewing the literature I tried to establish what was already known about the topic, what was missing and, what was required to obtain new facts or evidence (Gillham, 2000). Before traveling to Sudan I reviewed a number of relevant electronic publications, which provided useful information about development issues in Sudan. The documentary sources offered a great deal of information, some of which was required to answer the research questions, such as the extent of participation and the projects' participatory methods, inputs, and achievements. Detailed records of activities and participants were provided by IFAD-CCU and the NKRDP monitoring system. These secondary sources also offered some guidance on which further questions could be raised (May, 1997). Data such as participation in credit and literacy programmes was found to be useful in investigating the impact of such interventions and perceptions of development participants and non-participants. The data also helped in conducting in-depth investigations and establishing explanations and interpretations.

Development projects usually provide substantial documentation on their design, activities, sites and stakeholders, in the form of periodic, progress and evaluation reports, studies, surveys, work plans and consultancies. IFAD and other related institutions such as MAAI

made available all the periodic and evaluation reports, documents and consultancies of the NKRDP and the WNASP to be examined and used for the purpose of this research. These documents were written for different purposes and to dismiss any reporting bias the documents were carefully examined and compared with data from other sources (Schofield, 1969; Yin, 2003:81).

## **Primary Data**

Design of a data collection protocol was guided by research questions and a literature review. Since participation is a multi-dimensional concept different techniques were implemented to offer a space for participants to address the issues raised in various ways. The research methods were focused on obtaining first-hand knowledge of a phenomenon under study by combining interviews, participant observation and Participatory Rural Appraisal methods.

Interviews yielded rich insight into people's experiences, opinions, aspirations, attitudes and feelings (May, 1997:109). The interview approach was useful when there was a need for general descriptive information (ODA, 1995). Participants' statements regarding events were carefully assessed to check whether they were a reasonably accurate record or not (Whyte, 1984). The projects' stakeholders and others who were influenced or affected by development interventions were identified. All the research participants were contacted and participated in face-to-face conversation and discussion. The research topic was discussed in-depth, guided by focus group discussions and semi-structured interviews which accompanied the PRAs sessions, particularly in rural areas. This was augmented by the structured and unstructured interviews. The structured interviews were conducted with the NKRDP staff, while unstructured interviews were employed with the development academics, planners and NGOs activists. I spent time getting to know the participants and ensuring they understood the questions. Face-to-face interviewing enhanced my investigation in an attempt to gather accurate information (Schofield, 1969). Interview with each participant lasted for an average of one hour.

Questionnaires were relied on structured interviews to collect data and each participant answered the same questions (May, 1997:110). This method allowed for comparability between participants' responses. Apparently, structured interviews are not suited for

communities where illiteracy is dominant and cannot realistically reflect people's personal perceptions and views. Therefore this method was only used to a very limited extent, mainly to collect data from the NKRDP technical and field staff and explore their perceptions. When utilised in this situation the structured interviews were combined with semi structured interviews and focus group discussions. Twenty NKRDP staff participated in this interview, which focused on issues that related both directly and indirectly to them within the participatory processes. It provided information about their qualifications, experiences and personal perceptions on particular issues such as participation, plans to involve people in projects' activities, factors that influenced the participatory processes and the sustainability of implemented activities. Appendix 4.2 lists the structured interview questions.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted among a wide range of people. Allowing the participants to answer the questions on their own terms, but I always asked them to be concise and clarify their answers when required. This technique was used to interview fifty-nine participants, including project managers, staff and agencies' representatives, who were queried development agencies policies and projects strategies, perspectives, objectives and plans. The same technique was used to interview the members of community organisations and some special community members such as the elders (both men and women). The semi-structured interviews were also conducted with locals whether they participated in the projects or not. The in-depth interview assisted in clarifying and validating the observations. Some of those locals were observed in action or when participating in the NKRDP's meetings. If it appeared that some people had additional thoughts to share they were invited to a semi-structured interview. These interviews were conducted in a natural and relaxed situation. For project staff this was always in the office or guest houses, while rural communities had no preferred venue, simply where they were available either in schools, farms, houses, public places such as community centers (*Dar*) or even under a tree.

The unstructured interviews were conducted to enable the participants to answer questions and talk about the subject in detail within their own personal context (May, 1997:112). Through unstructured interviews the potential participants' (planners, decision makers, theorists and local figures) concepts and concerns about participatory development were explored. This group of research participants had their own perspectives on participation and

development interventions. Although the participants were free to talk about the topic I focused on keeping the conversation away from evaluative topics and tried to encourage the participants to give descriptive statements and explanations focused on the themes of the topic.

I found the focus group discussions one of the most valuable tools of research investigation. According to Kassam (1997) they aim to gain a deeper understanding of the dynamics of the participants' values, perceptions and perspectives. It enriches the quantified data obtained through structured and semi-structured interviews and file review. The focus group promotes a comfortable atmosphere for the disclosure of people's ideas, experiences, and attitudes about a topic (Krueger and Casey, 2000). I used the term 'focus group discussion' instead of 'focus group interview', because it is more acceptable and common, when translated into Arabic (*Magmuat Negash*). Chambers (1983) suggests developing various approaches, especially if it requires listening to people. Focus group discussions were found to be useful in obtaining background information about the topic, stimulating new ideas and concepts, generating impressions of programmes, activities and organisations, facilitating the interpretation of previously collected data and identifying problems and constraints within the new programme (Stewart and Shamdasani, 1990:12). The participants of development processes were considered as central subjects and actors of that processes; therefore they were given the opportunity to use their own words and their own style of expression to present their views.

In order to create an environment in which participants felt comfortable to enrich outcomes many focus group discussions were organised from a variety of existing groups, such as project technical units staff, field staff, members of Village Development Organisations (VDOs), GROs, members of women's coffee groups, members of *Sandug* and both project participants and non participants. In the villages of NKRDP, VDOs have a list of households who are project's participants and those who are not. From this list a selection of participants were chosen and meetings were held in the school or the community development center. After introducing the topic, the participants were invited to discuss the issues related to the research topic using their own terms, and to express themselves as freely as they could.

At national level a series of focus group discussions were conducted and participants from different cultural backgrounds, professionals and academics (White and Pettit, 2004) were invited and encouraged to talk openly about participatory development and other relevant issues. The selected topics were introduced and covered in a systematic way and questions were designed and directed in an unbiased fashion (Overton and van Diermen, 2003). After introducing the topics I ensured that the discussion stayed focused on the identified issues. Thirty-three focus group discussions were conducted, each group involving eight to twelve individuals with duration of approximately two hours (Stewart and Shamdasani, 1990:10). In both the unstructured interviews and focus group discussions, the 'reflecting back method' was used allowing the participants to return to previous points and elaborate upon them and correct or modify their statements, also allowing me to clarify my interpretation (May, 1997). As the interview questions were open-ended, a probe technique was used in order to encourage the participants to clarify or amplify their answers (Whyte, 1984).

The focus group discussions were usually followed by refreshments, which were shared by all. During this time I used my notes to make a quick summary of the discussion and compared them with the research assistant's notes before checking their accuracy by reading them back to the members of focus group. Further comments or modifications were invited before final discussion notes were agreed upon.

Field experience showed that combining semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions with PRA methods were very useful in the rural settings. The following section draws on PRA sessions and illustrates how they linked to other methods, particularly in the rural settings.

Interest in participatory methods resulted in the increase of popularity of Participatory Rural Appraisal methods (PRAs) as a planning and research method. PRAs were developed to overcome difficulties experienced with conventional data collection methods (Mosse, 1998). According to Evans (2003:1) the question here is not only 'what kind of methods we use' but also 'what are the purposes and values they promote?' The ethical values of this study are guided by the philosophy of participation. Therefore participatory methods, especially PRA techniques and focus group discussions, were employed intensively for data collection. PRA methods help to develop a good rapport with the community and 'triangulation' was the key to its success (John et al., 1992:98).

PRA consists of a set of techniques, which are used to serve different purposes (Dhamotharan, 1998:7). For the purpose of this research some of the PRA techniques were used to collect the required data as well as involving the respondents as active participants in this research. Through these techniques local people created diagrams and maps by using symbols, which helped them to explain and modify their data. PRA methods generated data and also enabled local communities to analyse their own environment, whether it was ecological or socio-economic (John et al., 1992). Local communities in North Kordofan State, especially *Bara* and *Um-Ruwaba* have a vast knowledge of Participatory Rural Appraisal methods (PRAs) as the NKRDP has used them in its baseline surveys before implementing any activities. I was interested in using wealth-ranking techniques, as in most development projects improving the living conditions; livelihoods or well being of the poor was a main 'objective'. The immediate objectives of the projects under study were to improve the living conditions of targeted communities. I decided to use this technique to examine the projects' contribution in achieving improvements. When we discussed wealth and wellbeing in one of the focus group discussions in *Bara 1*, one of the group members suggested 'let us select three people who can sit here, and identify the families according to their wealth'. I suggested comparing the wealth ranking for the community prior to the commencement of the NKRDP with the present-day rankings to observe any changes and to see if some households had moved from one category to another as a result of their participation. It was observed that the participants were much organised, listened carefully and gave the task much consideration. They placed the households' names on cards and sorted them into different categories according to their living conditions. After identifying all the households according to their wealth they presented their criteria for making this classification. The remainder of the members listened carefully and made suggestions or corrections before unanimous agreement on the final rankings. In order to avoid any distortion during the process, as pointed out by Chambers (1997:143) some participants may be reluctant or unreliable in ranking themselves, relatives or friends, two separate groups (men, women or mixed) conducted the task.

The Decision Tree is another PRA technique, which is used to illustrate the issue of sustainability of the different project activities as perceived by its participants (John et al., 1992). Through this method the participants identified which activities would probably be sustained after the project's assistance stopped and explained their reasons and justifications.

Venn diagramming was also used to indicate the relationship between the village or village groups and different institutions. This method uses circles to represent groups and institutions and lines to represent links between them (John et al., 1992). This technique was chosen to explore and identify the relationships between community organisations and the project, locality and state institutions and other private, regional and national organisations including those who were expected to be partners in the future.

Historical profiles were also used which benefited from the input of elders among the community groups. Using historical profiles contributed to identifying all the historical events that required communities' collective actions and responses. The participants were able to identify events since the year 1906, during which the famous Sudanese famine occurred. They always recalled this by saying, 'let us start from the 1906 famine'. People memorised the history of their villages. The sharing of poems, stories and proverbs assisted in preserving these histories, which are very useful in a culture of verbal tradition, where people can memorise the dates, actions, circumstances and outcomes that accompanied such events. Sometimes people remembered events by associating them with other prominent ones, such as the changing of a political regime or a famous famine like that occurring in the region during 1984. Local language always reveals a great deal about history and values. During semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions the participants presented and explained the local communities' folk culture, songs, poetry and proverbs that represented and reflected people's values and beliefs around participation. Through the history profile technique the participants narrated their communities' experiences and actions at times of difficulties, hardships and joys.

The PRA results were analysed through open discussion. During the discussion the participants made comments, added information, analysed and corrected each other. They made interpretations of their criteria and choices. This helped to generate new insights and open a channel for thinking empathically and collectively about the reasons for the community problems, or the unexpected outcomes of such interventions and the best possible adjustments and solutions. During mixed PRA sessions and focus group discussions in the NKRDP men and women usually sat in two separate groups, either facing each other in the case of an open discussion or facing the speaker during a presentation or meeting. Men and women were not equally engaged in discussions, young women rarely contributed if men were present. In contrast old women in general displayed more confidence in speaking up

and contradicting issues in public, interrupting the discussion to oppose or change ideas. The situation was different in the WNASP, as women did not take part in public meetings. In general in both projects, the communities were not intimidated by government officials, powerful people or project staff.

Observation as a part of a multi-method approach is at the heart of the case study method offering both qualitative and quantitative data (Gillham, 2000:49). Participant observation refers to a method of data collection in which the researcher is not merely a passive observer and may participate in different events within the case studies (Yin, 2003:93-94). Observing the NKRDP staff and community interaction and the role of leadership, power relations and representation within the community was found to be of great value. Interaction and participation in decision-making, proposing and raising ideas, taking action, and leading, supporting or opposing ideas, all assisted in the interpretation and establishment of links to project documents, policies, social organisations structures and gender differences. Many semi-structured interviews were guided by the actions of participants whom I had observed in the NKRDP and in community affairs. During interviews those participants were asked to explain their actions and perceptions. Many notes on interesting observations and particular events in both projects were taken and revised to consider if further interviewing and reading were required. I kept research diaries to record observation and make notes. The following section explains how the collected data was recorded and validated.

### ***Recording and Quality of Data Collection***

There are three choices to record interviews and discussions 1) tape-recording 2) taking notes on the interview or discussion as it progresses and writing a detailed report later and 3) making notes on the interview after it has terminated, then writing or dictating a report later. Priority was always given to tape-recording, if acceptable to the participants, as tape recording could help in focusing on the conversation and notes taken of the non-verbal points. Tape recording also provides a complete record of what has been discussed and presented. From field experiences it could be said that tape recording could only be efficient and useful when used in semi structured and unstructured interviews, when interviewing only one participant at a time and ensuring that there was no noise interference. It was impossible to use tape-recording during PRA sessions or focus group discussions as more than one person may be talking at once. All of those who participated in semi structured and



unstructured interviews, with the exception of two, were happy to have their interviews recorded. One of the two was a former Minister and a national NGO activist, who refused to be recorded from the outset. The other was a senior agricultural manager who asked for the recorder to be turned off while he talked about sensitive government interventions. The tape recordings provided me with all recorded material required, although the transcription of interviews as also noted by May (1997:128), was time consuming. However, by limiting the recording to necessary points only and organising my time in an efficient way I was able to do most of the transcription before leaving the Sudan.

### ***Writing and Reviewing Field Notes***

Keeping a personal note book was a valuable way of recording ideas, insights, and questions to be asked later on, names of people to talk to and notes about the required copies of reports or lists of participants (Gillham, 2000:21). It was very useful to record and continue reviewing notes on a daily basis. I also continued to record my observations and questions for further investigation without jumping to conclusions or making personal interpretations. Notes also included recording people's comments, responses, questions and the context in which they raised them. The continuous reviewing of field notes continued to offer valuable guidance and data.

I set a weekly programme for reading, reviewing and preparing a summary of main findings. This helped in identifying what was missing and what was required before leaving the site (village). I transcribed recorded material on a daily basis, editing the written observations and highlighting the main findings that directly contributed to the research questions. Every week I prepared a weekly work plan that included proposed daily activities for the week, any themes or topics that remained uninvestigated, and any community groups or officials not contacted or included.

Taking notes also provided accurate information and more records than could be captured by memory. It added a kind of formality, especially for participants who felt pleased when their discussion was recorded (Whyte, 1984). I noticed that some participants tried to talk slowly in order to ensure that what they said had been clearly recorded. After each interview and PRA session I found it was very useful to write down notes and comments about the participants' behaviour and response and any other points that may need further

investigation. A documentation sheet was adapted from Flick (2002) and used for this purpose and this is reproduced in Appendix 4.3.

To ensure the reliability of the research data I employed different methods in order to provide triangulation that strengthened confidence in the research results. 'Triangulation' refers to the combination of different methods, study groups, settings and different theoretical perspectives in dealing with a phenomenon (Flick, 2002:226). The cross-checking of data was done by interviewing several participants about the same events in order to evaluate the collected data, correct errors and deepen understanding (Whyte, 1984). Research findings were also presented and shared with the research participants before leaving the sites. This helped in making corrections and accommodating the participants' comments.

My knowledge of local dialects (spoken Arabic) helped me to elicit the meanings and concepts of responses. It saved much time and offered an opportunity for in-depth interviews and conversations with different groups. I considered this knowledge and also to some extent familiarity of socio-cultural environments, as a source of strength enabling a deep understanding. Because of my previous involvement in participatory development projects and my familiarity with the local culture in both case studies there was a risk of personally influencing and affecting the interview process or the research findings. Shank (2002:4) asserts that it is not possible to conduct qualitative research without becoming involved to some level. The question is how we can be involved without influencing the research outcomes. Shank (2002:106) suggests that we need to avoid the temptation of allowing our thoughts and feelings to influence our questions. This possibility had been raised to my awareness so I continuously sought my objectivity. I found it very useful to be aware of my role as a researcher and keep the issue of validity at the center of my focus.

Having explained the various processes up until the completion of the data collection the next section explains how the collected data was processed and analysed.

## **Data Reduction and Analysis**

The primary documented sources were reviewed using the content analysis, which consisted of three stages: stating the research problem; retrieving the text; and employing a sampling method; and interpretation and analysis (May, 1997:171). This meant that when there was a large amount of data, sampling and coding procedures were used. The data retrieved from documentary sources was combined with what was collected through interviews, observations and participatory rural appraisal methods (PRAs).

The processing of data began in the field with the transcription of tapes and by doing the content analysis, taking each transcription in turn, reviewing its contents, highlighting substantive statements and ignoring any irrelevant material, repetitions or digressions (Gillham, 2000). At the beginning a limited number of interviews, transcripts, observations and PRA outputs were examined to clarify the main themes, variations and patterns of responses to research questions, until a clear idea about the contents and value of the data was developed. Subsequently a criteria for selectivity was adopted (Bartlett and Payne, 1997). The highlighted statements were then grouped into different categories under an identified topic that coincided with the research questions and main themes. I reviewed the list of identified categories, read it repeatedly and developed a new layout through combining similar categories and separating others, checking again the proposed headings and making whatever were changes needed to make sense before doing the interpretation.

In regard to analysis there are several suggestions about how data could be analysed, but there is no one rule in doing so (Burgess, 1989). Yin (2003:109) identifies five techniques for analysing case studies: pattern matching, explanation building, time series analysis, and logic model and cross-case synthesis. Pattern matching techniques were used because of its relevance to explanatory case studies. Data analysis was carried out through constant comparative methods, by classification and by identification of relationships. During analysis processes there was an ongoing effort to integrate and link the categories. Doing analysis while in the field kept the process of data collection continuous, as further or different questions were raised and more data were collected to fill the gaps. In regard to statistical analysis, some of the quantitative data was retrieved from the projects and community organisations records, in addition to data that was generated through PRA methods.

Conducting this research required specific ethical considerations that were adhered to throughout. The following section highlights the various steps that are taken and considered in order to protect the rights of all parties.

## **Ethical Considerations**

Ethical issues comprise a set of norms that scientists in all disciplines are obliged to follow (Babbie, 1990:338). They are concerned with what is right and just in the interest of all parties (May, 1997:54). In line with this the Massey University Code of Ethical Conduct for Research was adhered to. My research was classified as low risk as harm to participants was not significant. Prior to the fieldwork I obtained the ethical clearance from the Massey University Ethics Committee, this was followed by an internal departmental process that was concerned with and discussed ethics issues. Through this discussion the research strategy was reviewed and several issues that required special consideration were raised and clarified.

In relation to privacy and confidentiality, permission from local communities and relevant authorities was sought and obtained in the early stages, which I considered a condition for selecting the case studies. The information sheet and consent forms were translated into Arabic and distributed to the literate participants, and read out and explained to those participants who could not read. In most villages the members of committees and the *Sheikhs* explained that there was no need to sign these consents. Instead the contents were explained and verbal acceptance was received.

While conducting the interviews and facilitating PRAs sessions and focus group discussions, some aspects and issues were carefully considered. At the beginning I usually made an opening introduction by informing the participants about myself, my mission and why I had chosen them to participate. I also gave them a brief statement about the research and expected advantages. The participants had been assured that their identities and all personal information would remain confidential. To conceal the identity of participants and villages codes and pseudonyms were used. The participants were informed that they could withdraw from the study at any stage and could refuse to answer any question. The participants were also informed that the discussion could be recorded so long as they had no objection and that they had the right to stop the recording at any stage during the interviews.

Any factors that might create a negative impact on conducting research such as, dressing style, spoken language and behaviour were considered (May, 1997). While living in the villages I always wore the Sudanese national dress '*El-Tuob*'. This dress style has begun to disappear in the towns though people in the villages continue to wear it. Not wearing *El-Tuob* would have created a negative image about me. This adherence to traditional dress is not necessary for a foreign female researcher as people accept and enjoy seeing other people's traditions so long as they are modest. How questions could be phrased regarding sensitive issues such as power relations and political interventions, were also taken into account. After completing the interview or closing the PRA sessions the participants were given a chance to ask questions or to comment. The participants were also made aware about their right to see and comment on the completed report before the material was published.

## **Limitations**

Despite the comprehensive coverage, which was made through employing varying data collection methods, which provided an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon under study, there were some limitations that needed to be considered. Firstly, the case study represented some localities in Sudan that share some similarities with other localities and communities yet still have their own unique characteristics in terms of socio-economic and physical environments. This raised the issue of generalising of research findings beyond selected cases. This issue is widely discussed in the literature and was assumed to be one of the limitations. Yin (2003:38) argues that the problem lies in generalising findings of each case study to other case studies, when it should be by generalising findings to 'theory', which can act as a vehicle for examining other cases. Generalisation is dependant on to what extent different interventions and prevailing conditions are similar to other settings. In this research the quantitative outcomes of the participatory development processes are one of the important elements that needed to be examined and analysed in order to identify the extent and quality of people's participation, and offer options for such improvements. Getting access to this data in a large project's area required a precise, reliable and continuous monitoring process over an extended period of time, which is impossible under time and resource limitations. However, most of that data, apart from what was checked against the fieldwork findings in some selected villages, was retrieved from the projects' records.

## Summary

To explore participatory development processes, there is a need to gain knowledge about people's lives, values, organisations and practices that are linked to it. Therefore I employed a case study strategy and used a range of research methods that I believed to be socially acceptable, practically viable and likely to yield maximum information. In addition to secondary sources and interviews, PRA techniques and focus group discussions were used extensively, which enabled the research participants to interact, share their experiences and express their views in an open and relaxing environment. After PRA sessions and focus group discussions the participants were asked to take their time to check the accuracy of the summarised information and ensure that their perceptions and views were correctly and completely recorded.

Observations were recorded daily in field notes and continuously reviewed in order to determine if further investigation was required and what of value was to be included in the final report. Attending the common meetings between the NKRDP staff and local participants in the villages, as well as the project's internal meetings had offered good opportunities to observe the interaction between the project's stakeholders and record discussions and responses. All these methods were the channels, which allowed me to engage with many participants who had a wide range of knowledge, experiences and perceptions on the phenomenon under study.

In relation to ethics the participants were fully informed of their rights and their participation in the study was valued and appreciated. Meanwhile in order to avoid any inaccuracy or invalidity of the collected data, I established and maintained a professional and trusted relationship with the research participants. This chapter concludes with the identification of limitations such as the generalisation of research findings.

The remainder of the thesis begins the second stage of this study. In the following Chapters (Five to Nine) the research participants play a central role by presenting strong and clear arguments on major issues that influence the development processes in Sudan. Research participants also explain their views and perceptions about the role and attributes of influential development actors, such as government, local NGOs and development agencies.

## **Chapter Five: Sudan Context: Background and Development Efforts**

### **Introduction**

The previous chapters have been mainly concerned with developing a general context for the research topic. This chapter narrows the scope of the study by moving from the wider to the limited scene of the Sudanese context. It provides an introduction of Sudan's politics, economic development and civil society movement. A journey that started with independence in 1956 when many political changes, development efforts and interventions took place. People's involvement in these interventions was explored in this research through review of documentary sources along with interviewing research participants from different backgrounds. This chapter also provides a comprehensive frame for the next chapters by examining the basic components that influenced participatory development within the Sudan context. It moves gradually from the national scene to grassroots experiences within specific development projects.

Sudan is one of the wealthiest countries in Africa in terms of natural resources. With less than four% of the continent's population, it has seven% of the continent's cropland, 13% of its pastureland, and ten% of its livestock population (WRI/UNEP/WB/UNDP, 1996:3). The country has a total area of 2.5 million km<sup>2</sup> extending from the hot arid North to wet tropics in the South. It has diversified ecosystems that provide immense fertile land of about 80 million hectares (about 20% of this land space is cultivated), natural pastures of about 24 million hectares, a forest area of about 64 million hectares while the remaining land is desert or semi-desert. Considerable water resources are available from the River Nile and its tributaries, along with seasonal streams and an annual rainfall of 109 billion m<sup>3</sup> of water. In addition to this is underground water underlying the Nubian Sand-Stone Aquifer, which is one of the largest water reservoirs in the world with an estimated potential rechargeable 29 billion m<sup>3</sup> of water. Sudan also has a long coastline on the Red Sea and shares extensive borders with nine countries of Northern, Central, Eastern and Western Africa. Such a position engenders a mix of trade, culture, social, ethnic and other human ties built through history. Sudan was one of the first African countries to achieve independence from Britain in 1956.

In addition to its natural, agricultural and animal resources, Sudan abounds with potential mineral wealth of which petroleum, now exploited, is the most important with commercially proven and prospects for additional reserves. Gold mining and exports are increasing while numerous minerals such as iron, copper, mica, zinc, chromate and manganese together with non-ferrous resources such as plaster; lime and black sand are also available in appreciable quantities and potentially tradable. In the opinion of many international institutions, the existence of all these resources could pose a real base for industrial development (WRI/UNEP/WB/UNDP, 1996).

Current estimates put the population in excess of 30 million with an estimated annual growth rate of 2.6% and a population density of 10.2 per km<sup>2</sup>. However this figure masks wide variation with respect to effective population density on arable land, which exceeds 50 persons per km<sup>2</sup>. According to the last Census of 1993, the demographic characteristics of the country indicate a young population structure with those aged less than 15 years accounting for about 45% of total population. There is no precise information about pre-university schooling. However, the 1993 Population Census indicated that 47.5% of the total population aged ten and over in the Northern States could not read and write (Sudan Government, 1997) while there is no information about the Southern States. Sudan suffers from rural-urban migration as a result of drought, desertification and civil war. Statistics show that 33% of the population lives in urban areas, 43% of them living in the capital Khartoum (Sudan Government, 1997).

Oil exports started in 1999 and refined oil products and natural gas in July 2000. According to a recent government report (Sudan Government, 2006:13) the output of the emerging oil sector increased from an average of 185, 000 barrels per day in 1999 to 500, 000 barrels per day in 2005 (Sudan Government, 2006:13). The same report points out that the economy is, and for the foreseeable future will remain, highly dependent on agriculture and oil. Agriculture is the mainstay of the economy contributing about 37% of the GDP, and 15% of exports and providing livelihood for about 70% of the population (Sudan Government, 2006:14). The agricultural contribution to GDP has declined during the last five years (2000-2005), while on the other side, the oil sector has developed from almost nil to more than 11% of GDP over the same period. Oil and petroleum products now accounts for 81% of exports and 40% of public revenue (Sudan Government, 2006:14). The present trend of economic



growth is focused on commerce and not on production (Pitamber, 2001:3). However a large part of the national income is absorbed by debt repayment and general government consumption; including military, internal security and excessively large bureaucracies, which are not related to development (Pitamber, 2001).

It does appear that Sudan has huge potential to achieve development and escape the symptoms of underdevelopment and poverty. To understand and analyse the development efforts there is a need to introduce the political system as a base for exploring the outcomes and factors that influenced the development processes. The next section identifies the features that characterise the political system and examines the role of politics in development.

### **Political System: An Overview**

Sudan is one of the African countries that were formerly governed by Britain and liberal constitutional arrangements had been made before independence to facilitate the transfer of power in a democratic way. These reforms and arrangements were created with no or little consideration for local political and social structure and only aimed to maintain the dominance of political elites who could protect the linkages with former colonial power. The misuse of state power, during both colonial and postcolonial periods, has been held responsible of generating uneven development. In this regards the central State relied heavily on the cooperation of local elites, tribal and religious leaders (Abdel-Atti, 2004). Contrary to the expectations of many optimistic analysts the experience of liberal democracy in independent African countries including Sudan proved to be short lived (Healey and Robinson, 1992:12). Between the years 1957 and 64, 1969-84 and from 1989 until now (2007) authoritarian military regimes replaced the liberal democratic ones, creating a one-party state. The first military government in 1957 had followed the nationalists' path that dominated the political life before and after Independence. The second military government (1969-84) adopted a socialist ideology and the present military government has made another shift towards Islamic ideology. In general, the performance of democratic regimes in Sudan was poorer than the authoritarian regimes and that could justify the public support and acceptance of military intervention in democratic government. Healey and Robinson (1992:122-124) assert that 'there is no systematic evidence that more democratic types of regimes are more successful in achieving economic development and income equality, at the

same time authoritarian regimes cannot be expected to perform better in these criteria'. Apparently what counts in the formulation of policies are the skills of the political leadership, the structure of decision-making, the quality and role played by bureaucracy, the composition of governing coalitions, the relationship of the government with trade unions and business, and the role of external powers, particularly the financial institutions (Healey and Robinson, 1992:124).

### ***Ethnicity and politics***

Sudan's people are seen as one of the most diverse on the African continent. Metz (1991:47) points out that there are 'about 600 ethnic groups speaking more than 400 languages and dialects'. However as a result of drought in 1984/85 and civil war; between the north and the south, large numbers of people migrated to the capital city, whom according to Metz (1991), started to speak Arabic as the dominant language of the area.

In 1991, Sudan adopted a federal system with nine states, matching the nine provinces that had existed from 1948 to 1973 (Bahr al-Ghazal, Blue Nile, Darfur, Equatoria, Kassala, Khartoum, Kordofan, Northern, and Upper Nile). In 1994, these were reorganised into 26 states. The northern states of the country cover most of the Sudan and include most of the urban centres. Most of the Sudanese who live in these states are Arabic-speaking Muslims. Among these are several distinct tribal groups: the *Kababbish* of Northern Kordofan, a camel-raising people; and the *Jaalieen* and *Shaigeyya* groups of settled tribes along the rivers. There are also semi-nomadic *Baggara* of Kordofan and Darfur; the *Hamitic Beja* in the Red Sea area and Nubians of the northern Nile areas, some of whom have been resettled on the Atbara River; and the *Nuba* of southern Kordofan and Fur in the western regions of the country. The south also contains many tribal groups. The *Dinka* along with the *Shulluk* and the *Nuer* are among the Nilotic tribes. The *Azande*, *Bor*, and *Jo Luo* are "Sudanic" tribes in the west, and the *Acholi* and *Lotuhu* live in the extreme south, extending into Uganda. The southern Sudanese practice mainly indigenous traditional beliefs.

Different people use different terms or conditions to define themselves as a group that share specific attributes. However, some may share some common attributes such as religion, language and traditions with other groups but still view themselves as a separate unique group. In this regard, Metz (1991) refers to two ethnic groups *Atuot* and *Nuer* in the south of

Sudan who speak the same language and share many common characteristics but still identify themselves as different groups. Similar situations could be applied to most northern groups, such as *Jaalieen* and *Shaigeyya*. In Sudan, especially in rural areas, there is a respect for tribal and religious leaders. However, at least till the late 1990s ethnic group' names were not an identity. Metz states that:

Ethnic group names commonly used in Sudan and by foreign analysts are not always used by the people themselves (Metz, 1991:49).

In general, different tribes have their cultures, behaviours and thinking. Cultures range between Arab, African or a mixture of the two. However, in most cases is not 'one pure culture' but a mixture that differentiates Sudanese culture from others. In general, these unique characteristics often act to bring people together rather than splitting them apart.

### **Politics and Conflicts**

The 1940s witnessed the rise of the nationalist movement led by two major northern political parties, the Umma Party and the National Unionist Party. The Umma Party called for independence from Egypt while the National Unionist Party called for a union between the two countries. It appeared the two parties had no intention to involve the southern people. As a result the first civil war between the north and south broke out in 1955, immediately before independence. The war continued until 1972, when the Southern Sudan Liberation Movement signed a peace agreement with the Nimeri government. In 1980s internal unrest emerged as a result of the decline of goods and services and all northern political parties were involved in rallying people against the government. To gain support, at least from some political parties, the government in September 1983 announced the application of *Sharia'a* (Islamic). As a result the civil war between the north and the south broke out again led by the Sudan Peoples' Liberation Army (SPLA). At this stage the conflict was constructed around religious differences. The war continued during various regimes and resulted in displacement of millions of people, and deterioration of living conditions in all parts of the country. In 2002, the Government of Sudan and the SPLM reached an agreement on the role of state and religion and the right of southern Sudan to self-determination. In 2004, the Government of Sudan represented by the National Congress Party and the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) signed a declaration committing themselves to conclude a final comprehensive peace agreement by December 31, 2004, which was formally signed on January 9, 2005 ending a

conflict which had lasted for about 21 years. The agreement resulted in establishing a new Government of National Unity and the interim Government of Southern Sudan. The government principles are based on power and wealth sharing and security arrangements between both parties.

In 2003, while the north-south conflict was on its way to resolution, increasing reports of attacks on civilians in Darfur region began to emerge. This conflict emerged when two armed groups, the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM) and the Sudan Liberation Army (SLA), launched attacks on policemen, government garrisons and civilians in the area. The rebel groups appear to have recruited from within two or three 'African' sedentary, communities such as the *Fur* and the *Zaghawa* tribes. These groups (JEM and SLA) rely on their tribes support while they were allied with some national political parties. The SLA is led by a former communist, and previously linked to the southern movement (SPLM/A), while the second group (JEM) is led by a former member of the Islamic Front, which has split into two parties, Bashir's National Congress Party and the Popular National Congress (PNC) led by *Hassan Al-Turabi*. The JEM is believed to be part of the PNC.

In response to JEM and SLA attacks, the government used the air force and locally armed groups against the rebels. These armed groups are lately known as the '*Janjaweed*'. Their members were formed from those who have been trained by the Libyan leader (Gadzafi) in 1980s as part of political adventure in the region (An-Naim, 2004). In addition to those who have been involved as informal militias that supported both elected and military Sudanese government against the SPLM/A since 1987 as well as those who suffered from JEM and SLA attacks. The distinction between those who were involved in this conflict has been conceptualised as racial -Arabs and Africans. Connell in describing those who were involved in this conflict states that:

The frontline combatants and their victims are mainly of Arab or African descent, through it is often difficult to distinguish them face to face. But the '*Janjaweed*' themselves are more a rampaging gang than an organised militia. Even their name is merely a colloquialism for 'horse men with guns' not a term with cultural, linguistic or political roots, and they do not in any organised way 'represent' the Arab tribes in western Sudan (Connell, 2004:1).

Hoile (2005) reports that the '*Janjaweed*' were either involved in the previous war or taking advantage of the present situation in addition to those who suffered from the rebel attack.

Hoile (2005) refers to the initial attack by the rebel groups, which resulted in revenge attacks by nomadic tribes, that of Arab origin, as:

The systematic murder by rebels of several hundred policemen and the destruction of over 80 police stations created a security vacuum. The rebels' targeting of tribal leaders and tribesmen from several "Arab" tribes, and the theft of thousands of head of livestock from these tribes, has resulted in an explosion of intercommunal violence with revenge attacks and livestock raids by equally well-armed nomadic tribes (Hoile, 2005:2)..

Regarding the origin of this conflict An-Naim (2004) refers to the economic and environmental factors that have affected the western region of Sudan since the 1980s. He states that:

The underlying cause of the present disaster in Darfur is the failure of traditional systems for the allocation of land and water resources and the mediation of conflict. This failure is compounded by a combination of drastic ecological changes and cynical human manipulation. As the ability of local communities to cope with drought and famine declined over the last two decades, and the capacity of their traditional systems of conflict mediation over rapidly diminishing resources became overwhelmed, opportunistic politicians took advantage of the situation (An-Naim, 2004:1).

However, various reports focus on marginalisation of the region and refer to economic factors as a major reason behind this conflict. Hoile (2005) questions the impact of underdevelopment and marginalisation as a main cause in this war. However, Hoile (2005) and An-Naim (2004) assert that some Sudanese national political parties and external forces have more influence on this conflict.

Clearly, there were economic problems as well as conflict over power which made the rebel movements, the central government and their allies act and react aggressively. However, the Darfur civilians are paying the price. The Darfur conflict has affected four million people and displaced about two millions (ECHO, 2007:1). Moreover, this conflict has created ethnic conflict. After the emergence of Darfur crisis and the engagement of tribes in a politicised conflict in the region, the ethnic element emerged. It was observed that people tend to introduce themselves by ethnic background and engage in aggressive discussions. At present many intellectual groups and academic institutions as well as the media are starting to raise concerns and focus on what they called a 'peace culture'. This concept is constructed around international concern about the country's future and political stability.

The cultural and geographic diversity of Sudan constitute strong arguments in favour of some form of decentralised administration capable of formulating and implementing adequate responses to widely different sets of problems, needs and constraints in different parts of the country (Guimaraes, 2005:1). Therefore various regimes have responded to the country's diversity by implementing structures of regional and local administrations and governments. The following section looks at these structures and the factors that have influenced their operations.

### ***Decentralisation: Concepts and Practices***

Sudan has a long history of decentralisation. The roots of the present federal system go back to the early 1970s, when it was adopted by the May regime (Military Dictator 1969-1984). This system was reinforced by the Regional Government Act 1980 (Sudan Government, 1997). The act gave a wide range of powers to the regions and established regional assemblies. Further reforms took place in 1992 when the country was divided into 26 states. These new divisions were adopted and officially recognised by the Sudanese Constitution of 1998 and the Comprehensive Development Strategy (Sudan Government, 1992) supported the decentralisation policy.

Decentralisation as a concept and practice received great interest and required people's participation on a wider scale; which was always a challenge for military regimes. The main challenge is that the system of central government, which by nature is not participatory, has functioned for decades. This system is based on keeping people out of decision-making processes (Mathur, 1995). The establishment of one ruling party and politicisation of civil services and the tendency to centrally control all the regions have weakened the local governance system (Manallah, 1998). In Sudan the regimes created new organisations as a lobbying mechanism in order to have legitimacy. However, local communities have developed their own strategic mechanism by inserting their own local leaders in these new organisations rather than confronting these regimes (MAI-SSI, 07/2005/Khartoum).

Al-Hardallu, (2002:131) argues that an increase in government and administration units and localities resulted in high expenditure and politicians and bureaucrats at both national and

state levels used state power to acquire and direct resources. Healey and Robinson (1992:25) called them the 'state class' who worked hard to accumulate wealth and protect themselves from loss of power or status. It also becomes obvious that the role of powerful people in the state or national government is to lobby for public resources and services for themselves and their own ethnic group or locality, rather than to influence the choice of national policies. In this circumstance the political status of individuals becomes a determining factor in resource allocation, directing development and achieving social change. Personal connections and tribal entity are key issues in this respect.

The unclear division of power between federal and state governments encourages the federal government to encroach on state powers, particularly in relation to land and its allocation as a potential source of income. According to the constitution, the *Wali* (State Governor) has the authority to allocate land but the people also have rights to claim land if they have occupied it for longer than ten years. Some specific acts, such as the Forest Act, mandate government departments responsible for managing and controlling resource use at national level. Accordingly, the responsibilities over natural resources and environmental management are divided between the federal and state governments. The federal government has exclusive jurisdiction over matters relating to minerals, subterranean wealth and trans-boundary waters. Detailed regulations on land, state forests, agriculture, animal and wildlife are the state's responsibility subject to federal planning and coordination. The constitution also provides for the establishment of councils to assume responsibility for the division of, and planning for land and forests between the federal authority and the states. At the state level powers are transferred to (elected) local councils, which have administrative and financial autonomy to implement local level development, including planning and regulations in relation to land use and natural resource management.

Decentralisation released the national government from some financial responsibilities as the state governments were required to generate revenue to fund their own development plans. To generate these funds state governments resort to available resources, such as land and forests, and increasing taxes on agricultural products, which can easily result in misuse of natural resources and increase the burden of the rural poor. Although the process of decentralisation in Sudan has created closer relations between formal authorities and local communities some constraints are encountered. Egeimi (2001:14) points out that the division

of responsibilities between the federal and state governments is ambiguous and confusing, which resulted in conflicting decisions over land use and the encroachment of the federal government on state natural resources. Moreover, lack of technical and financial capacities have a negative impact on the decentralisation processes. Egeimi (2001) suggests that decentralisation policies and laws must be reviewed in order to avoid misinterpretation and wrong applications.

## **The Sudanese Model of Development**

The colonial government concentrated its development efforts on irrigated agriculture and the railroad system throughout the Anglo-Egyptian condominium. A limited amount of rain-fed mechanised farming had also been developed during World War II. At independence Sudan was considered as one of the most successful economies in Africa, as the new Sudanese government's principal development inheritance was the vast irrigated Gezira Scheme and the Sudan Railways (Al-Hardallu, 2002). Since that time Sudan has been adopting different policies to achieve development. According to Mohammed (2001) some of these policies have recorded a remarkable rate of increase in economic growth while most of them have failed.

In the 1950s the economy grew fast though at a low level and inflation was unknown. The exchange rate of the Sudanese pound was fixed at about one Sudanese pound to 3.53 United States dollars and both the balance of payments and government budgets were generally in good shape (Deng, 2000:6). In the 1960s the economy continued its growth, inflation and exchange rate were stable but the balance of payments and government budgets recorded some deficits (Deng, 2000:6). This could be due to various ambitious national development plans that focused on rural development (Al-Hardallu, 2002). Mohammed (2001) points out that the implementation of these plans was carried out through investment programmes that were drawn up annually by specialised government agencies and funded through loans. Investment was at a high rate in the first years, well beyond projections, and a number of major undertakings had been completed by mid-plan, including the Khashm al-Qirbah, Manaqil and Al-Junayd Irrigation Projects, and the Roseires Dam (Mohammed, 2001:49). However, as the 1960s progressed, a lack of funds threatened the continuation of development activities. The situation had deteriorated so much by 1967 that implementation



of the Ten Year Plan was abandoned. This plan was discarded after the military coup led by the May Regime in 1969.

In the early 1970s the May Regime adopted a Five-Year Plan of Economic and Social Development for 1970-74. This plan, prepared with the assistance of Soviet planning personnel, sought to achieve the major goals of the May revolution; creation of an independent national economy; steady growth of prosperity; and further development of cultural, education, and health services, through socialist led development. As a result the government initiated several irrigation projects at Rahad, Satit southeast of Khashm al Qirba, Ad Damazin, and Kinanah; and established factories at Sannar, Kinanah, at Shandi on the Nile northeast of Khartoum, Kosti, Kaduqli, Nyala, and Rabak on the White Nile south of Khartoum. Roads between Khartoum and Port Sudan were also paved and excavation began on the Jonglei Canal. In 1987 Chevron had discovered the existence of oil in commercial quantities.

Despite the May government's claim about development, rural areas suffered from national policies as more emphasis was directed towards agro-export production through large scale-farms and agricultural schemes. Small-scale farms, which provide domestic food supply to the majority, were completely neglected. Moreover, most of the integrated rural development projects had not succeeded in achieving the intended objectives. Hurreiz (1981:172) points out that the Sudanese government tried to achieve agricultural development after 1970 when large-scale agricultural schemes were established. This resulted in replacing the traditional system and people adopted modern mechanisation at the expense of the traditional inherited one. Hurreiz clarifies that new technologies were completely imported from outside, including equipment, spare parts and also experts, a system that was often not feasible or was difficult to maintain. Gradually the old system collapsed as the farmers lost contact and familiarity with the traditional way of agricultural production and hard work. Hurreiz notes that what had been an acceptable way of life had now become a burden. Moreover, these agricultural development efforts had neither led to increased productivity nor raised the standard of living of the broad masses. It threatened the economic and social structure of the society and undermined traditional values and practices (Ayoub, 1998).

During the 1970s the economy experienced a degree of stagnation and some inflationary tendencies began to show and exchange rates started to fluctuate in 1978 (Deng, 2003:6). As

a result the government adopted a structural adjustment programmes (SAPs) in the 1980s, which was imposed by the World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF). This reform programme adopted trade liberalisation, currency devaluation, privatisation and removal of subsidies on food, education and health services. The economy showed a limited response to these reform packages. Earnings from public corporations, however, fell short of projections, and growth in government current expenditures greatly exceeded revenue growth. As a result the government had to borrow from the Bank of Sudan to cover the current expenditure account.

The liberalisation and structural reform policies adopted by the State since the 1980's have brought about a total absence of the economic and social redistributive function of the state (Ibrahim, 2003:18). This is reflected in the poor services delivered and the significant fall, in real terms, of the salaries of the public sector employees. Abdel-Atti (2004:54) asserts that the rigid implementation of SAP measures resulted in large-scale unemployment, economic hardships, deepening poverty and social instability. According to Ibrahim (2003:19) these policies have enlarged the poverty cycle in which a large segment of the local population was trapped. Ibrahim (2003:19) reports that those households who were previously classified as being above an acceptable minimum level of subsistence, such as the middle-class, are now continuously falling below that level and becoming the new poor.

The worsening domestic economic situation was marked by growing inflation. The inflation stemmed in large part from deficit development financing, increasing development costs because of worldwide price rises, and rising costs for external capital. At the same time external debt pressures mounted, and Sudan failed to meet its scheduled payments. In October 1983 the government announced a three-year public investment programme but plans to Islamise the economy in 1984 impeded its implementation, and after the May regime was overthrown in April 1984, the programme was suspended.

In 1987 the elected government initiated an economic recovery programme. This programme was followed, beginning in October 1988, by a three-year programme to reform trade policy and regulate the exchange rate, reduce the budget deficit and subsidies, and encourage exports and privatisation. The new military government cancelled this programme in 1989. By 1991 the value of the Sudanese pound against the U.S. dollar had sunk to less than 10 percent of its 1978 value and the country's external debt had risen to US\$13 billion (ISS,

2005:2). The ISS (2005:2) related that to droughts and accompanying famine occurring in the 1980s, and the influx of more than 1 million refugees from Eritrea, Ethiopia, Chad, and Uganda in addition to the persons displaced by the continuing war in Southern Sudan who were estimated to number between 1.5 million and 3.5 million. According to Abdel-Atti (2002) the decline in Sudan's agricultural and industrial production had begun before these calamities as few development projects were completed on time and were failing to achieve projected production. Accordingly, Sudan found itself in a cycle of increasing debt and declining production.

The next section looks at the government efforts that aimed to overcome difficulties and failures.

### ***The Present Government's Model for Development***

The present military government took power in 1989 and decided to follow a different path from the Western capitalist and socialist approaches. The model adopted modernisation but as announced by the government was an attempt to adapt modernisation to the local and Islamic contexts. This approach did not see Western modernisation as a threat to national identity rather as a model to use and to learn from.

In 1992 the government started to employ an Islamic banking system all over the country. The Islamic system of finance is based on profit and loss sharing. The main feature of Islamic banking is the prohibition against charging interest in financial transactions. Deposits and financing operations are conducted under the following modes: *Musharaka*, *Mudharaba*, *Murabaha*, *Salam*, *Qard al-Hasan* and *Ijara*. Appendix 5.1 further illustrates these banking systems. Foreign businesses viewed these measures as a disincentive to do business in Sudan. Deng (2000:41) points out that it was not clear whether this approach is consistent with the liberalisation of the financial sector or not. Deng contend that in Sudan efforts are being made to develop Islamic instruments for monetary control and government finance. Ibrahim, (2003:39) argues that the move towards the institutional financing of the poor can largely be made by profit and loss sharing rather than provision of credit insurance or guarantee schemes. Ibrahim (2003:38) also suggests that 'Islamic banks and Western style interest-based banks should not view each other as competitors, instead they could learn from each other for the benefit of their clients, particularly the poor'.

In addition the government adopted a massive privatisation programme and agreed to make token payments on its arrears to the IMF, liberalise exchange rates and reduce subsidies. According to Deng (2000:72-3) the adoption of the economic liberalisation strategy in Sudan is influenced by four factors. 'Firstly, the failure of the socialist planned economy that had been employed since independence led to a shift in paradigm towards a neo-classical market-oriented view of the development process and policy. Secondly, this shift was based on ideological preferences for the role of market, which is supported and preached by the major international and bilateral donors, who make the adoption of policy reforms a condition for granting technical and financial assistance. Thirdly, in the early 1990s economic reforms have become a fashion and most countries have rushed to change. Fourthly, the adoption of this strategy is facilitated by decision-makers who are educated in the West and biased towards western ideas and ideologies'. However, the implementation of this model was considered 'to be aggressive' and resulted in a dramatic increase in the cost of living and poverty levels, especially in rural areas (Pitamber, 2001:12).

The Sudan government adopted a ten year Comprehensive Development Strategy (CDS) from 1992 to 2002 (Sudan Government, 1992). The strategy committed itself to ensuring growth with self-reliance and food security, combating poverty, reducing distributional inequality, improving social services and increasing people's choices towards a better quality of life. The IMF and major creditors were concerned that the government had not sufficiently reduced subsidies on basic commodities, thus reducing its budget deficit and in the early 1990s the International Monetary Fund (IMF) took the unusual step of declaring Sudan non-cooperative because of its nonpayment of arrears to the Fund and threatened to expel Sudan from the Fund. To avoid exclusion the government developed links with socialist regimes and south East Asian countries through trade and financial assistance. The government worked with foreign partners especially China and Malaysia to develop the oil sector and announced an economic recovery programme in the mid-1990s to encourage and involve the private sector as well as international investors in the development process. The government issued the investment law, named Investments Encouragement Act (1996) which aimed to increase national income, ensure food security, support the development of basic infrastructure, implement the national self-sufficiency policy and ensure full co-operation between the Islamic, Arab and African countries. The investment act also aims to facilitate: 1) easy transfers and remittance of profit and cost of capital, 2) a discount in the percentage

share to be paid from export revenues and easy access to production resources and 3) the use of foreign expertise not available locally and to ensure easy transfer of funds for the investors. Pitamber (2001:13) argues that the objectives and services offered by this Act supports those who have regional and international contacts, are already involved in import and export activities, and have sufficient funds; which means that those who are on the margins of the economy will not be able to enter as active participants and benefit from the offered incentives and services.

As a result of these efforts the government achieved high economic growth. The national economy has, however, begun to show recovery symptoms. Sudan's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) grew by 6% in 1999 and inflation dropped sharply to 16% after peaking at 166% in 1996. By 2004 the inflation rate was down to 8.8%. The GDP real growth rate for 2004 was 5.9%. The growth is attributed to oil, which has boosted state income since exports began in mid-1999, and to the new programme of IMF reforms started in 1997 (ISS, 2005:1). Higher growth has increased the Government's budget revenues a 2006 IMF's report (2006:7) pointed out that Sudan's real GDP rate grew at an estimated rate of 8% in 2005. The report shows that oil export revenue rose because of higher oil prices but imports rose dramatically and non-oil export slowed. The IMF announced that the reforms applied by Sudan since 1997 without any foreign aid put Sudan in a good economic position, particularly when compared to countries that experienced the same post-armed conflicts stage.

Despite some improvements since the late 1990s widespread poverty, highly skewed income distribution and inadequate delivery of social services remain serious problems (Al-Hardallu, 2001; Pitamber, 2001; Ibrahim, 2003:32). Studies of the Sudanese economy have agreed on the rise of poverty in terms of those affected as well as an increase in incidence and severity, particularly during the 1990s (Ministry of Manpower, 1997; Sudan Government, 1997). The degree of poverty is measured to be 82.7% and 83.1% for rural and urban populations respectively (Ibrahim, 2003:32). According to the Human Development Report (UNDP, 2006c: 1) Sudan ranks 141st out of 177 countries. Based on UNDP classification these categories are deprived from decent living which implies a lack of adequate food intake, decent shelter and clothing, access to schooling and health facilities, access to information and technology and access to recreation facilities. Clearly the Sudanese case proves that economic growth does not necessarily mean better standards of living for the majority of the population. The conventional perception of economic development continues to determine

development policies and strategies as indicated by research participants; participation has been reduced to an instrument to gain people's acceptance and support. This is further discussed in Chapter Nine.

Integrating women into development has received more attention from the government as well as development agencies. New policies have been approved and more women have been involved through government and civil society organisations. The next section explores this trend in more detail.

### ***Integrating Women into Development Processes***

The Comprehensive Development Strategy (CDS) emphasised a fair distribution and provision of resources and opportunities for both men and women. In Sudan the extended family provides social services to different members; the family is responsible for the old, the sick, and the ill. In general women are assumed to carry the burden of these social services beside their traditional responsibilities, particularly in the rural areas. The Comprehensive Development Strategy identified women's needs in a special section. It calls for bridging the gap for women by allocating 15% of the development budget to women's programmes and 25% quota system to ensure women's participation in parliamentary political life (Kuku and Jamal 2002:232). However, in 2002 the percentages of women in parliament and in social and popular committees are 10%, 5% in the state councils of the Northern states, 11% in Khartoum state and 8% in the assemblies of the Southern states (Kuku and Jamal, 2002:232-33). At national level, the government implemented new rules regarding property rights. The law even favours women over men in case of divorce, as land is put under a woman's name and in joint title to land if she is married. In general there has been an effort to integrate women in development processes as women development directorates were established in some relevant ministries. However, in Sudan the division of labour between women and men varies from culture to culture and from one economic group to another (Osman (2002:23).

All development projects in Sudan, particularly in the 1980s, adopted the Women in Development approach (WID) (GCRT, 2003:6). Women's programmes were implemented as a component of development projects, which were basically focused on utilising women as a human resource and aimed to provide them with basic needs as mothers and housewives. According to Gender Center for Research and Training (GCRT) (2003:8) WID was criticised

for not addressing women's situations within the society as influential citizens. Therefore in the 1990s the Sudan government, through its comprehensive development strategy along with development projects, began to adopt the concept of Gender and Development (GAD), which is aimed at tackling and challenging customs and traditions that impede both men's and women's development. In this regard the research participants have challenged some of these perspectives. The following responses during field research represented a common view recorded during interviews and focus group discussions at national level. A businesswoman argued:

'We in the Sudan, particularly in the cities, did not experience any oppression or exclusion because of being women. Unfortunately, our local women NGOs followed the foreigners' organisations in repeating the same scenario about women's exclusion and suppression, just because they wanted to get support. However, I own and manage factories and enterprises, supervise male technicians and workers, traveled abroad to arrange for purchasing some material, and never face any problem. Women have not enough confidence to develop themselves. These resources, which were wasted in arguing over gender issues, if directed to development by now could lift African's women from their misery' (BW-FGD, 07/2005/ *Khartoum*).

A female academic who had previous working experience in rural areas explained:

'Most of those women who hold senior political and administrative posts have failed to present good models. They are either arrogant or aggressive and never care about women's issues. Rural women are suffering because of illiteracy and lack of services. If that changed they would enjoy the same opportunities like urban dwellers. However, those local NGOs who always talk about gender issues and rural women never go there and make real contribution to change that situation' (FA-FGD, 07/2005/ *Khartoum*).

These responses raise important issues, especially the impact of women's education and the role and contribution of educated women. Moreover, it questioned the external development providers' perspectives and contributions. Osman (2002:24) adds that when organisations try to address gender-based inequality in their development programmes in Sudan's rural areas they face challenges because the majority of women lack time and have low educational attainments.

In general, the outcomes of various development efforts were influenced by multiple factors, particularly civil war and internal conflicts which is considered a key constraint for

development by increasing the burden and suffering of all people, especially women, in the affected areas. At national level there is growing recognition of the need for peace and development; accordingly, all the people of Sudan had followed the negotiation process in 2004 between the government and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM) with high expectations and hopes. A male academic at the Institute of Research and Development Studies/University of Khartoum explained:

'People in the north of Sudan supported the government decisions, despite the political and ideological differences between them and the government. After signing the agreement there was a belief that the agreement had favoured the south more than the north, but people contently accepted that. It was seen as a peace price. People were tired from conflicts and suffering' (MAI-SSI, 07/2005/ *Khartoum*).

Having introduced and discussed the main features that characterised and associated with development policies since independence the following section identifies some of the outcomes that emerged as a result of the peace agreement and are directly related to this study.

### ***Framework for Peace, Development and Poverty Eradication***

The framework for Sustained Peace, Development and Poverty Eradication in Sudan was launched after Sudan's central government and the SPLM signed a permanent cease-fire agreement, in January 2005, to end the country's civil war. This cleared the way for a comprehensive peace deal. I had the opportunity to attend several workshops and meetings, which were sponsored by the government, the UNDP and national NGOs. It was attended by government officials, academics, civil society organisations and development policy analysts, who were involved in discussion of many issues that related to development and poverty eradication. The pattern of high economic growth and widespread poverty also cautioned against a development model predicated solely on economic growth. In fact, all concepts of development are being challenged. There seems to be a certain degree of consensus centred on a number of issues such as economic growth, increased productivity, technological advancement and people's inclusion that aims to raise the standard of living of the broad masses. In this regard the workshops' participants raised issues of debt relief, the use of oil revenues and decentralisation. The participants also questioned the actual level of participation of NGOs in the development process, querying how widespread ownership of the framework really was. Recently the government commitments for democracy and signing



of peace process between the North and the South of Sudan have created opportunities and hope. Civil society organisations gained more freedom to speak and assess the central and local state policies and strategies and performance.

To have a clear idea about what kind of role could be played by NGOs the following section examines the nature and potential of civil society organisations.

### **Civil Society Organisations in Sudan**

The freedom of association is generally recognised as a crucial element to social justice and economic progress (Egger, 1995:101). In Sudan there are no legal obstacles to people's rights of association and the Sudanese' law has guaranteed the people's right to create their own organisations. The Societies Registration Act was passed in 1957 and since that time and up to the 1980s the registered NGOs were largely confined to charity and relief works (Sudan Government, 1997).

For the time being in Sudan there are different forms of community organisations, which can be classified into five categories according to their ideological background and roles. Firstly, social-oriented organisations, which focus on providing social and public services, such as adult education and health services both in cities and rural areas. Secondly, politically affiliated organisations which are supported and funded by political parties and operate as social services providers. Thirdly, the trade unions, which are work-based organisations. Fourthly, academic and technically oriented organisations which mainly exist in the capital or some cities where there are research or academic institutions. Finally, religious organisations that offer both social services and spiritual support. All these forms of organisations exist at national and regional levels, while at grassroots level there are only social and religious organisations.

All trade unions were dissolved in 1989 when the present regime took power and a new law governing the structure and activities of trade unions was passed. The law considered any people who work are 'workers' irrespective of their specialisations. According to Sudan's First National Human Development Report (1998) the number of unions decreased from 104 to 26. MohamMed (2002:55) asserts that variations and contradictions in interests have influenced the unions and largely transformed them into political organisations controlled,

co-opted or suppressed by government. This could be due to the fact that throughout the political history of Sudan trade unions had played an important part in changing the military regimes. The present military government has made some protective measures to reduce or control the trade unions role, particularly in the political arena. Meanwhile, other organisations whether they are technical or social organisations have a wide space of freedom. The national NGOs have their own linkages with international NGOs, development agencies, and donors. Different organisations are involved in partnership or have relationships with external institutions with each partner having its own interests and expertise. In this context the most important issue is that freedom of association be a condition for successful participatory development (Egger, 1995:110).

Theoretically the Comprehensive Development Strategy (CDS) focused on creating self-reliance, satisfying human quest for dignity and freedom in balance with the advancement in economic, social and cultural life emanating from Sudan's national heritage. In order to achieve that the strategy referred to the need to mobilise the people of the Sudan and forge new partnerships between government, NGOs, grassroots organisations and the private sector. The CDS (Sudan Government, 1992:59) also states that 'social development is a joint effort involving the government and citizens which means that people have the full right to participate in decision making processes through different ways. This strategy calls for more involvement of people in all fields of development. However, it seems that what has been stated by CDS was not practically adopted. The Sudan's first Human National Development Report (1998) points out that the laws governing NGOs made it difficult for them to register, although they managed to survive and some achievements were made.

In 1979 the government established the Sudan Council of Voluntary Agencies (SCOVA) to undertake the following duties: development of voluntary activities; recording and exchanging of information; networking between specialised groups, capacity building through training and sensitisation, cooperation with relevant government bodies; and strengthening of bilateral relations at the regional and international levels. SCOVA was assumed to embrace non-governmental organisations, foundations and commissions that had been officially registered in the Humanitarian Aid Commission. There is conflict of interest among different NGOs, therefore, practically, SCOVA cannot represent all the national NGOs since it was initiated and supported by the government. SCOVA records show that

there are 400 organisations that are registered as members. It appears that the members of local NGOs have the skills and knowledge of how to attract and mobilise resources and develop connections with donors and development agencies, particularly those agencies that believe in participation and are interested in building relations with local NGOs rather than deal with government institutions. The failure of NGOs in establishing any form of effective networks among themselves has great influence on their performance and outcomes. This results in the in wasting of time and opportunities to make a real contribution in developing and improving the living standard of the majority who lack the skills and knowledge to initiate interventions and access the resources' providers.

After signing the peace agreement in January 2005 the government opened more space for civil society organisations to develop more relationships with international NGOs and donors. It also allowed the political parties to resume work and trade unions were formed in democratic ways. The Government of Sudan established the Humanitarian Aid Commission to oversee all humanitarian organisations and made a commitment to remove any obstacles to such work. However, from time to time the Sudanese Government suspends some international NGOs and local non-profit groups working in different partS of the country. Government reports accuse these organisations of not complying with regulations. On the other hand, non-profit organisations continuously complain that the government interferes with their work with many restrictions. On 20 February 2006, Members of Parliament passed the 'Organisation of Humanitarian and Voluntary Work Act, 2006', which replaced the Humanitarian Aid Commission Act. The Amnesty International viewed the new Act as a way of exercising power over the operations of NGOs.

The critical question could be whether these NGOs are capable of playing a significant role in any development interventions? In practice, most civil society organisations are not engaged in governance or local community issues and mainly work at a central level. There are negative public opinions and perceptions about NGOs. During the last three decades there are many NGOs whose names are linked with certain powerful people or political parties and even professional NGOs did not escape this trap.

The national and regional organisations are almost non existent at grassroots level, particularly in North Kordofan and the White Nile States where this research was conducted. In Sudan both national and regional NGOs are unknown by ordinary people in rural areas,

where they could be extremely useful. Despite the large number of national and regional NGOs it appears that rural people are not aware of their existence. People who are not involved directly or indirectly with these NGOs criticised their trends, members' behaviour and connections with outsiders. Participants from different backgrounds, journalists, academics and specialists have recorded these perceptions and views:

'The civil society organisations are controlled by elites, who seem to be permanent employees with unknown employers, speak foreign languages, stay in the capital or big cities and they are very good in organising workshops and meetings. In fact, being a civil society activist is a very profitable job' (MJ-SSI, 07/2005/ *Khartoum*).

'The members of NGOs are spies, working against their country and looking after their personal benefits. They rent the best houses in the town, drive cars, travel abroad and organise conferences and workshops. I think they know what will please the donors and the international agencies, which finance them. They are just good at complaining and criticising government, but who is going to criticize them?' (GAD-FGD, 11/2005/ *Khartoum*).

'One of the problems of this country is that these NGOs, most of them claim that they are concerned about development, but they are not. They are either supporting this political party or that one, or have other hidden agendas. Unfortunately, it becomes a personal business. Many national organisations were led by the same persons or group of people for the last two or three decades. It was well understood that 'working with them makes you one of them' (MAI-SSI, 07/2005/ *Khartoum*).

'Having an NGO nowadays is a business; it is a source of income. An NGO is a group of people who know how to access international organisations. Their concern is to travel abroad, attend conferences and tell lies about their home country' (FAD-FGD, 11/2005/ *Khartoum*).

The national and regional NGOs, at present, are involved with international organisations in shaping development. However, most of these NGOs, particularly in Khartoum and capitals of the states, have failed to implement sound and visible projects or activities that alleviate poverty, develop communities, combat corruption and back transparency and these NGOs themselves are not above suspicion.

Discussion and debate about development strategies as well as implemented interventions is very intensive. In practice development efforts were badly hit by the many constraints that

resulted in wide scale poverty. The following section identifies the factors that have influenced the country's development processes.

### **Factors that Influenced Development Processes**

The current debate on development focuses on the economic crisis in Africa, especially the low growth economies. Ghai (1987:110) in his analysis of economic growth performance of some sub-Saharan countries identifies Sudan as one of those that showed extremely low performance, despite its high economic potential, in terms of commercial food production from rain-fed and irrigated land. Ghai (1987:121-125) related Sudan's poor performance during the period 1960-83 to the following factors: Firstly, political instability, there were frequent changes of regime and the country had to deal with a flux of refugees from neighboring countries, mainly Ethiopia and Chad. The country also experienced civil war during this time. Secondly, economic policies, increasing overvaluation of the currency in combination with higher taxes on cotton, and deterioration of irrigation in the Gazira scheme, resulted in declining production and exports. This resulted in a severe scarcity of foreign exchange, which had adverse consequences on the availability of essential goods and services, inflation and the growth of parallel markets. The third factor is that the large-scale nationalisation of major productive enterprises in 1969/70 resulted in the collapse of the private sector. Finally, mismanagement, corruption, and misappropriation of resources become a dominant feature. Chidzero (1987:136) added the following factors, which influenced all African countries; the manipulation of exchange rates and interest rates by some major developed countries has affected the poor countries' capacities to import capital goods and technology. Secondly, the issue of debt, in general, Sudan has struggled with a high and rising external debt burden since the late 1970s. In 2006 external debt reached US\$ 27.7 billion, of which US \$24.4 billions was in arrears (IMF, 2006:14).

At present more factors have emerged and influenced development and people's capacities in making a significant contribution in order to combat underdevelopment.

### ***Diversity of Ethnic and Political Groups***

The rise of authoritarianism in African countries has explained the persistence of ethnic divisions, weak political institutions, a shallow sense of nationhood and limited

administrative and technical capacity (Healey and Robinson, 1992:41). Diversity of ethnic and political groups in Sudan has made economic development, especially at policy level, highly politicised. Sudan has a largely rural population, who possess an ideology and social reality, such as tribal identity, which is not easily abandoned and does not run counter to the concept of national identity (Shahi, 1981:39). The last two decades in Sudan witnessed a sharp rise in the intensity of using the concept of marginalisation; economically, socially, and politically marginalised people and areas. Recently, rebel movements in Darfur and the Red Sea areas used marginalisation as a reason to justify their war against the government. In Sudan ethnic and personal relations influence the allocation of resources and development processes (Al-Hardallu, 2001). Ethnic and political conflicts are not guided by illiterates and ignorant people but by educated and highly professional people, who are often controlled by personal interests and supported by tribal and external power (MA-SSI, 07/2005/ *Khartoum*).

### ***Political Corruption***

According to Healey and Robinson (1992:42) nationalists and ideological parties in Sub-Saharan Africa have become entrenched political monopolies that offered rewards to their members and supporters in form of services, employment and training. Many others who might be qualified, educated or in need of services were excluded or not given fair opportunities. Political and ethnic forces influence hiring and firing processes, even for many professional posts. The personal ruler is supported by an administrative class, which preserves its power through patronage networks in which supporters receive many opportunities for their loyalty in form of jobs and resources (Healey and Robinson, 1992:42). Osman (2002:23) argues that within the Sudanese communities there is unequal access to, and control of resources, and limited participation in political and economic institutions.

In general the performance of the Sudanese economy has been basically dependent on the political ideology of the ruling regime. Therefore its development crisis is largely political in nature. Urban elites, sectarian leaders and tribal chiefs and their adjuncts have predominantly controlled economic and political power (Al-Hardallu, 2001:130). Those who are selected by the ruling party to lead national or state government are either members of the ruling party or traditional leaders who can ally the government. All the political regimes, especially the military ones, cannot rule by force and in isolation from local communities therefore they find a legitimacy by adopting certain mechanisms and creating new forms of organisations to

attract people's support, such as Social Union during the May Regime (1969-1984) and Popular Committee during the Salvation Regime (1989-till now). It is a form of monopolisation but using participation as a slogan and hence lobbying people (MA-SSI, 07/2005/*Khartoum*).

### ***Local Power***

In most cases the native administration and traditional leaders have constrained the development process and distorted the local governance system by influencing and controlling the official institutions (Manallah, 1998). In Sudan the ruling and opposition parties normally target the leaders of powerful tribes and work hard for gaining their support. Manallah (1998:222) illustrates that rural elites have benefited from the military regimes interest in gaining public support that could be attained through lobbying local leaders. Even democratic governments had sought voters' support through their traditional leaders. 'Those leaders could be highly educated professionals or have limited abilities and skills' (MAI-SSI, 07/2005/*Khartoum*).

It seems that it is not only the government and political parties who rely on local leaders in order to maintain power or gain supporters, but the development agencies as well have adopted the same approach for achieving different objectives. Development agencies normally choose to approach the communities through their leaders and continue implementing their programmes through this channel, despite evidence or possibility of corruption and oppression of others by those leaders (MA-SSI, 07/2005/*Khartoum*).

Moreover, the professionals' technical capabilities and behaviours may contribute to poor performance and lack of responsiveness. Whether those professionals are male or female they are blamed for not being responsive, dedicated and their knowledge is not adaptive to local conditions. A former minister explains that:

'The Sudanese society is very unique; the social institution is stronger than the government and operates through a consultative local constitution. Our main problem are those who were educated in the West and insist on living in isolation, they think, plan and implement alone and never consider people's needs and priorities, nor learn from the accumulated knowledge and experiences of those who acquired the true knowledge 'the locals' (FM-SSI, 07/2005/ *Khartoum*).

### ***Education System and Technical Capacities***

The government's education policies, since the 1990s, have neglected elementary education and focused on higher education while economic policy resulted in commercialising both the health and education services. The number of private schools and health care services are increasingly growing in the capital Khartoum, replacing public services. Access to these facilities is governed by income factor (Pitamber, 2001:18). This situation put more pressure on the majority of the population who were poor and who had no financial ability to send their children to school or continue their education. This directly influenced their contribution to any social or economic development initiatives (Pitamber, 2001:17).

In rural areas the quality of education in schools has deteriorated, as there is a shortage of teachers and books. As families have to pay for school level education; this makes it more difficult for poor families to send all children to school or allow them to continue their study. The national report discusses the government achievements in the education system, which focuses on the university level where there were twenty-one new universities that opened in different parts of Sudan (Sudan Government, 1997:84). Some analysts questioned the importance of opening a new university in a region where there is a high illiteracy rate (Al-Hardallu, 2001; Pitamber, 2001:18). The government has adopted different criteria for competition and admission to universities such as giving special opportunities for academics' and politicians' children. This deprived many competent students from their chances to attend higher education or develop a career through certain specialisations. Moreover, the continuous changing of the education curriculum and disappearance of subjects that raise the values of collective participatory work, solidarity and nationhood has created a new way of thinking and what is locally known as 'commercial education'. Fast investment in higher education led to rapid multiplication of the number of educated people and the increase in the opportunities of training in modern technologies. This policy was not accompanied by strategies or plans to benefit from them, which has resulted in an increasing number of unemployed graduates (Pitamber, 2001:16). Most of those who graduated from the new universities refused to return to their rural areas and become involved in any traditional jobs. This indicates that education by itself is not the answer to the problem of underdevelopment.



### ***Lack of Technical and Organisational Capacity***

Lack of links between government authorities and ordinary people has its disadvantages. It has led to poor achievements, deterioration and misuse of resources, as well as corruption and embezzlement of public funds, which have become general practice (Al-Hardallu, 2001). The corruption and misuse of public resources becomes worse when there are no strong and transparent civil organisations that have the capability to watch and assess the officials' performance and behaviours. The absence of linkages and relationships between ordinary people and official authorities could also be an intentional practice, a way of keeping the public unaware of situations. In general, the Sudanese people, through their grassroots organisations, have shown high responsiveness to development initiatives which resulted in the establishment of many services centres, such as clinics, schools and community development centres. Manallah (1998) points out that most health and community development projects established by the government, were ended by opening ceremonies. There are no plans and commitments from different partners, such as the government and financially capable community organisations to operate and sustain these activities, especially when the concept or the emerged projects are a new idea in which the community has no previous experience. In some communities, such as the Gazira scheme, where the level of education and organisational skills within the community is very high, most of the public services are implemented and managed for decades by communities through local organisations while receiving no or minor government support. It appears that all the above-mentioned factors have influenced the outcomes of development processes, contributed to low performance and limited people's participation.

### **Summary and Conclusion**

This chapter provided some basic information about the country's physical features, resources and population. It discussed Sudan's politics and the changes that have emerged since independence in 1956. It examined the governments' efforts in achieving development and introduced the civil society movement and discussed its capacity to contribute to development processes.

In terms of natural resources Sudan is considered one of the wealthiest countries in Africa. Its political structure extends from the federal government, state, locality to administrative unit. Successive coups with only 3-4 years of democratic governments have become an institutional mechanism for political succession. Despite the implementation of decentralisation in 1970 the practice of the one ruling party system has distorted the local governance system. In regard to development the Sudan has been adopting different development policies; various regimes had ambitious programmes, with special emphasis on agricultural development except the present government, which started to focus on oil exploitation and commerce.

At present the government adopts liberalisation and free market policies. Meanwhile, it encourages people's participation in order to achieve the objectives of these policies. Pitamber (2001:17) viewed these policies as aggressive, which raised the poverty level and created more suffering. The federal government raised the concept of participatory local governance; but it does not seem to be applicable as the central government faces internal and external difficulties: civil war in Darfur, international pressure and undeclared sanctions, and corruption. On the other hand, international development agencies rely very much on national NGOs to influence the state policies and lead change. They spend a great amount of resources to mobilise local NGOs, particularly at national level, and build their capacities. Meanwhile, most of the existing national and regional NGOs, despite their large numbers and access to resources, have made no significant contribution to development processes and are unknown by ordinary people.

During the last decade debate on Sudan's crisis has primarily focused on political, constitutional, peace and cultural issues. Since 2005 and after signing the peace agreement between the government and Sudan People's Liberation Army more attention was devoted to development and how to overcome the symptoms of underdevelopment and poverty. To identify ways that could promote development processes and encourage people's participation in development intervention there is a need to learn from previous experiences and to acquire deeper knowledge about local communities, particularly their way of living, thinking, and responding to ongoing changes.

Chapters Six to Eight now present local communities' experiences with development interventions at grassroots level.

## **Chapter Six: Participatory Development Experiences of the White Nile Agricultural Services Project**

### **Introduction**

Chapter Five described how state policies have shaped development interventions and influenced the level and quality of ordinary people's participation. After examining the situation at national level, the thesis will further explore and analyse, in detail, the experiences of development projects at the grassroots level. By so doing this chapter aims to identify the factors that influenced people's participation and affected the outcomes of development interventions. It draws on the findings of the secondary case study, the White Nile Agricultural Services Project. It demonstrates how the project's strategy, local power relations and poverty have affected people's participation in various development interventions as well as the outcomes of development efforts. Moreover, due to some traditions and cultural values women in some communities are particularly disadvantaged and men do not accept their participation in local organisations and public activities.

The International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) decided to support the existing agricultural schemes in the White Nile State of Sudan by promoting a participatory self-help and women in development approach. In this case study, this study focused on the project components, which adopted participatory approaches or sought the community's participation. The White Nile project was phased out in 2001, therefore there were very limited records available from the IFAD central unit and many of its staff lists and recorded achievements did not exist. The most important development players were the local community organisations and primary participants who expressed their willingness to participate in this research and reported their experiences. Moreover, key informants participants from the State Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Resources and Irrigation (MAAI), Agricultural Bank of Sudan (ABS), Farmer Commercial Bank (FCB) and some former White Nile project employees also participated in the research. Semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions were used to gather data from those participants.

This chapter begins with introducing the White Nile Agricultural Services Project (WNASP) and describing the socio-economic setting in the White Nile State. Next this project's approaches as well as its interventions and outcomes are examined. The factors that influenced the project's participatory development process are the subject of the next section. The final section summarises and concludes the chapter.

### ***The Project Context***

IFAD has worked in Sudan since 1979. It has funded 14 projects for a loan amount of US\$186.5 million (IFAD, 2006:1). The IFAD programme in the Sudan has been shaped by government policies and priorities. It supported the government's efforts to promote decentralisation, self-reliance and strengthen local governance (IFAD, 2006:2). Part of this assistance was provided to implement the White Nile Agricultural Services Project (WNASP). IFAD and the Government of Sudan implemented the WNASP and it was supervised by the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS). Its main objective was to facilitate the transition of smallholder irrigation operations into viable farmer-controlled institutions, in which farmers are responsible for their own technical, financial and managerial decisions. This strategy was meant to create independent tenants, who could act as entrepreneurs (IFAD, 2002b: 4). These objectives come in line with the Government of Sudan's policy towards privatisation (IFAD, 2002b: 5). Within this frame, farmers' associations, such as unions and Production Councils, are assumed to provide and support the public services in their villages, such as schools, health service and youth clubs (SAM-SSI, 11/2005).

IFAD implemented the WNASP during the period 1996-2001. The total estimated cost of the project amounted to US\$ 14.9 million. Table 6.1 shows that the project was financed by IFAD, Government of Sudan, the beneficiaries, the Agricultural Bank of Sudan (ABS) and the Farmer Commercial Bank (FCB). IFAD's contribution was loan-based. 56% of the fund was allocated for rehabilitation programmes, aiming to improve the irrigation systems and increase productivity (table 6.1). IFAD proposed a new financial strategy for the White Nile Agricultural Schemes that focused on micro-credit through the national banks and 19% of the project finance was allocated for this purpose. The project was located within the irrigated area of the White Nile State. IFAD, the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, and the Ministry of Finance and National Economy made the decisions about what type of

interventions would be supported and where. For example the selection of the project sites, activities and operational policy. The main criterion, which was mentioned in the appraisal report, was that no scheme with over 550 farmers would be included (IFAD, 1996). However, this criterion was violated in two schemes where there are about 900 farmers each (UNOPS, 2001:4). A senior agricultural manager justified that by the needs of these schemes, as all the communities in the White Nile State were classified as poor (SAM-SSI, 11/2005). Furthermore, the completion report stated that scheme selection criteria were not clearly defined in the project documents. As a result an inventory study was conducted for selection of eligible schemes (IFAD, 2002b: 6).

**Table 6.1: Total Project Cost and Various Components Cost**

<b>Financier</b>	<b>Amount US \$ million</b>
IFAD	10.677
Government of Sudan	2.692
Beneficiaries	1.040
Agricultural Bank of Sudan	0.285
Farmer Commercial Bank	0.285
<b>Component</b>	<b>Amount in %</b>
Rehabilitation	56
Credit	19
Project management	17
Agricultural services	8

Source: Produced from UNOPS (2001:1) and IFAD (2002b: 4).

Based on the overall objective of the White Nile project various activities were implemented through the following components (IFAD, 2002b: 5). :

- The rehabilitation of 24 agricultural schemes. Accordingly, 18 new pump units were purchased, 37 pump units were overhauled and six pump units were partially maintained.
- The support of financial institutions ABS and FCB, for the provision of credit for crop production, women's income generating activities and purchasing of 24 tractors.

- The strengthening of extension services by providing means of transport (4 vehicles and 6 motor cycles), audiovisual equipment and hiring 68 village extension agents.
- The improvement of the seed multiplication programme.
- The enhancement of adaptive research for existing crops and propose new one for the area.
- The support of community forestry.
- The provision of education and income generating opportunities to women in the project area who are comparatively disadvantaged and do not have access to the services and support of existing programmes.

Throughout the project's life various forms of organisational structure were adopted. The following section explains these changes and their impact.

### ***The Organisational Structure***

The project organisation structure had two phases; the first one was applied between 1996- and 1999 and the second started in May 1999 until the completion of the project. These changes had been introduced when the White Nile area became a separate State. During the first phase the Project Management Unit and the National Project Steering Committee were located in Khartoum. During the second phase the Project Management Unit shifted to *Kosti*, the capital of the White Nile State. The National Project Steering Committee was changed to the WNASP Board of Directors, which included among others four farmers' representatives selected by the farmers' unions, in addition to the Minister MAAI and representatives from the federal Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry. Before the new restructuring of the organisation and management of the project, the 'beneficiaries' representatives were only two members (SGO-SSI, 11/2005).

The existence of the project staff in the project sites was believed to increase the level of people's participation. The project records show that during the last three years (1999-2001) more achievements were recorded (UNOPS, 2001; IFAD, 2002b). The research key informants viewed the new structure as more effective as it located the senior management staff in the project site, increased the locals' representatives and facilitated the administrative procedures as well as supervision. However, the new organisational structure could have

been more effective if concerned state ministries, women's groups and financial institutions (ABS and FCB) were involved.

The project staff consisted of twenty graduates specialised in agriculture seven of whom were women. All the project staff, except one consultant, was Sudanese who were presumably aware of the local Sudanese culture, which is shaped by dominance of social relations and personal interaction.

Having briefly introduced the WNASP the following section looks at the main features of the White Nile State where the project was implemented.

### **The White Nile Setting: An Overview**

According to Davies (1986) the original inhabitants of the White Nile state were Nilo-Hamites from the Southern part of Sudan and Negroids from western Sudan. In the twelfth century A.D. Arabs began to arrive. Some of the original people mixed with them and adopted their traditions, specifically nomadism, while some left the region southward. At present the most dominant group is *Kawahla* who are divided into three main tribes *Kawahla* (retaining the original name of the group), *Hassaniya* and *Husseinat*. In addition there are the *Jaalieen* who are also divided into small tribes such as *Showeihat*, *Kurtan*, and *Magdlya*. However, there are many other tribes that do not belong to these mentioned tribes such as *Jaafra*, the *Mesellemy* and the *Arakiyin*.

Until the outbreak of the Second World War the majority of the populations of the White Nile State were nomads and semi-nomads (Mohammed, 1980). After the construction of Jebel Aulia dam and establishment of irrigated agricultural schemes things started to change. However, still animal-raising is practiced by the majority of the rural population.

The White Nile State covers an area of 30,411 Sq Km. People are basically dependent on rain-fed and irrigated agriculture. The development of an irrigated pump scheme in the White Nile State started in 1937 when the Jebel Aulia Dam was built (Mohammed, 1980). The two most important crops that have been grown under irrigation since the construction of the dam are the long staple cotton for cash and sorghum for subsistence. Other crops including peanuts, wheat, and onions are also grown. The potential of the state for such development includes the availability of water and agricultural land, the deep-rooted traditions of the

people reinforced by the development of a cheese industry which started in 1908, and the nearness to Greater Khartoum and the towns of the Gezira, all of which need uninterrupted supplies of meat, milk, and milk products (Abdalla, 1975). Due to the existence of irrigated schemes, there are semi-formal organisations, such as farmers' unions and the production councils, which have resources and links with state and financial institutions. However, evidence showed that these semi-formal organisations are not trusted or effective and therefore people depend on voluntary non-formal associations to run their affairs. People in the White Nile State formed these services-oriented grassroots associations some of which are managed by men and providing services to the community through managing education and religious affairs. Women, on the other hand, are involved in participatory saving funds and social groups. These grassroots associations are much more localised and work on their own. Mostly, they do not have any links with the regional and national civil society organisations or any relationships with government institutions.

The White Nile Agricultural Services Project was located within the irrigated area of the White Nile State and covered 24 schemes. The schemes in the White Nile State were normally small in size, accommodating between 300-900 families. Each scheme was formed of a village surrounded by agricultural land and the total number of farmers in each scheme ranged between 60-950. The project sites were characterised by high illiteracy, more than 76% (IFAD, 2002b: 10) and also suffers from lack of physical infrastructure, poor roads, weak markets and poor social services. Earnings from rural activities are limited to time of harvesting of agriculture crops and employment opportunities do not exist for young men or those who have families to sustain. However, women are not assumed to find jobs outside the schemes or provide money for families to survive as this is considered a man's responsibility, whether he is a husband, father, brother or close relative. The schemes of the White Nile State are an example of rural-out migration. After the harvest all of the men leave the villages, except a few who are elders and those who have rural businesses, such as traders. In general, the local governance in the White Nile State reinforced and legitimised the domination and control of power by local elites, who were often tribal leaders.

In each scheme there are a number of community organisations. Some are semi-formal, such as the Farmers' Union, Board of Directors of the scheme and the Village Popular Committee, and others are informal, such as education and religious committees and the women's *Sandug*. The semi-formal organisations have links with the government. Competition rather



than collaboration between the local semi-formal organisations is a common feature in the White Nile State and even within the same organisation and members of the community in the same scheme there was tension and conflicts. In general, there is a wide range of similarities between various schemes, in term of socio-economic conditions as well as the physical environment. The only difference that could be identified is related to the tribal mix of those involved, with some schemes accommodating people from different tribes while others belonged to one group only. Based on this condition and for the purpose of this research, the schemes were divided into two categories: homogeneous and heterogeneous communities. Two schemes, one from each category, were selected at random to explore and analyse the interactions between local communities and the project. In order to protect the confidentiality of the schemes as well as the research participants, the two schemes were given pseudonyms '*Ganfaria*' and '*Ahamda*'.

*Ganfaria* accommodates 900 families. There are six tribes involved, *Ahamda*, *Bani Garar*, *Falata*, *Ganfaria*, *Masadab* and *Macadamia*. In *Ganfaria* there is *Umda* (locality headman), *Sheikh* (village headman) and many grassroots organisations such as, the Village Popular Committee, Cooperative and Farmers' Union. There is also a Board of Directors, which supervises the agricultural services and coordinates with the State Government. As explained earlier, these local organisations exist in each scheme. In *Ganfaria* there were separate elementary schools for girls and boys as well as a full boarding secondary school for boys, which housed two hundred and fifty students from the scheme and the surrounding villages. Due to the government education policy and the withdrawal of subsidy from schools, the *Ganfaria* secondary school deteriorated in the mid 1990s and completely collapsed in 2001 when the government withdrew the entire subsidy and the community failed to sustain it.

It was observed that the collapse of the school took place during the project time. This raises a concern about the contribution and impact of a development project that was assumed to contribute directly to the improvement of living conditions in the area and support the privatisation process. It also questions the validity and effectiveness of the self-help approach in very poor communities. The project was meant to improve the locals' wellbeing and strengthen the grassroots organisations so they would be able to support and sustain the public services. In fact, some communities in many parts of Sudan managed to sustain their public services, even if at lower levels than that offered by government before the new

privatisation policies were adopted in the 1990s. Apparently, the case of *Ganfaria* scheme is quite different. Research participants indicated that the rich families, who are from one ethnic group, refused to support the schools and decided to transfer their children's education to Kosti the capital of the White Nile State, and pay a daily transport cost. Most of the poor families could not afford to pay the new expenses and their sons dropped-out.

Deterioration of community buildings and public services, and lack of commitment and obligation towards the entire community were attributed, by research participants, to power conflicts and the existence of different ethnic groups in small areas (village), as well as lack of government responsiveness and poverty. For example during the fieldwork it was observed that the girls' primary school was almost destroyed by heavy rain. According to research participants neither the scheme's local organisations (Board of Directors, Farmers' Union), who were assumed to be empowered by the White Nile project to take this responsibility, nor the state authorities, had responded to the teachers' report or request. One of the teachers that was interviewed during the fieldwork in *Ganfaria* explained:

'Look at our school, eight classrooms without roof. We talked to the leaders of local organisations who explained that they have no resources. However, we know that was not true, because they get a lot of money from the Agricultural Support Fund and the MAAI, which is in fact the farmers' money. Our leaders do not know the meaning of leadership. However, we decided to report our case to the education office at the Ministry of Education. No one helped us or thought to visit us. If you ask them for help you are simply wasting your time. Now we teach the children under the trees that were planted by children with the help of the project eight years ago' (FT-FGD, 11/2005).

The teachers revealed that they organised a fund raising programme for reconstruction of the school after they had been convinced that the government would never respond to their requests for support. They continued teaching the girls under the trees that were planted in 1997 by the students and the WNASP's support. Five of the teachers who participated in this focus group discussion revealed that they were involved in the project micro-credit and training. They believed that schools in the schemes were an efficient channel through which development projects and relief agencies were able to reach almost everyone. This means that through teachers and students, development providers can reach the rest of the community and inform them about events, announcements or news. Schools in rural areas could create a stimulating and supportive environment for development efforts. Awareness

campaigns could be organised to involve all groups, rich or poor, powerful or powerless. Messages could always be developed and disseminated from there. In fact, in rural areas schools also offer a free and trusted communication channel. This is due to the fact that all people, despite their differences, are directly or indirectly involved in schools through their children. In most cases the only educated and respected groups are teachers who might be outsiders, and I observed that many communities tried to encourage the outsider teachers to stay permanently in the villages by offering them a house, farm and arrangements for marriage relationships.

Another scheme that was randomly selected from the group of schemes that was identified as homogeneous was *Ahamda*. In *Ahamda* there are 400 families, and all belong to one tribe. The scheme covers a total area of 1,545 acres, which is used for growing cotton and sorghum. There is one elementary school and two separate secondary schools for girls and boys, which might explain the high literacy level among women as the existence of schools, especially for girls, in the village will encourage the families to enrol them. The Popular Committee estimated the literacy among women in the scheme at 80%. There is also a University Graduates Union with 80 members (MPC-SSI, 11/2005/*Ahamda*). Despite the high literacy among women they were not participating in local organisations.

the socio-economic environment of the White Nile State are governed by ethnicity and gender structures, which influenced community representation, power relations and allocation of resources. Having described these environments the next section examines some issues that were linked to the WNASP design and participatory approaches, and examines the nature of interactions between the people and the project.

### **The WNASP's Mechanisms: Formation of New Organisations**

The WNASP design emphasised 'participation' as a tool for implementation of development interventions through establishing close linkage with local government agencies and finance institutions, such as the State Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Resources and Irrigation, Agricultural Bank of Sudan and Farmer Commercial Bank. The project employed the same approaches and implemented similar interventions in all the schemes. The funding through an IFAD loan adopts a self-help approach in order to strengthen the local organisations in order to replace the state in funding the agricultural operations. This approach entailed the

participatory concepts that aimed to support the market-led development. This means that the project role in strengthening community organisations was intended to support the wider political and economic agenda (Schneider, 1999), which was adopted by the government. Practically, the project strategy was dependent on 'a self-help approach', that was reliant on locals' contribution, whether in cash or labour. This approach, apparently, focused on achieving efficiency and effectiveness. It aimed to reduce the cost of implementing the proposed activities during the project time. It was also intended to empower the farmers' organisations in order to take over the development responsibilities in their area and hence contribute to the national privatisation processes (UNOPS, 2001:2). This would explain why IFAD chose to involve local community groups in a rehabilitation programme. This programme focussed on the rehabilitation and replacement of old water pumps in the area, which used to be a government task. It also focused on gaining people's contribution in other supportive activities, such as agriculture extension.

The most important issue for the project was the implementation plan, which was focused on clearly pre-identified activities. During this stage, the field workers played a crucial role as they worked closely with the villagers. These activities and their outcomes were apparently monitored in detail (UNOPS, 2001; IFAD, 2002b). These reports offered guidance for interviews with the WNASP participants and some fieldworkers as well as key informants from many related institutions that had previous experience with the project.

The WNASP plan supported the formation of cooperatives and women's groups and collaborated with farmers' unions. One of the major concerns for this research is to find out how these participatory mechanisms influenced the extent and quality of participation as well as being influenced by the project strategies. The project supported 18 cooperatives and supported the establishment of a separate 24 informal women's credit groups; one group in each scheme. Only the cooperative associations were registered, assuming that these cooperatives would need to deal with formal institutions, such as local government and private firms. Women's groups were seen as informal grassroots associations, similar to education and religious committees.

The WNASP supported the formation of the cooperatives to facilitate the finance and marketing of products as well as initiating any further investments. At the same time, these cooperatives together with the farmers' unions were expected to provide services, such as

supporting schools, health services and maintenance of irrigation canals and roads. Each cooperative consisted of twelve members of which two were supposed to be women. However, repeated evidence revealed by research participants indicated that the project relied on some elite groups or members in the villages who had power to facilitate and direct the development process. It also offered them more training opportunities, which resulted in maintaining the exclusion of marginalised groups and individuals.

### ***Who is Benefiting from the Farmers Organisations?***

The formation of cooperatives was encouraged and facilitated by the project but in practice was controlled by farmers' unions. According to the Cooperative Registration Act 1996 farmers unions were responsible for formation of the cooperatives (SAM-SSI, 11/2005/*Kosti*). Apparently, the project did not investigate and explore power relations, and the strength and weaknesses of existing organisations before deciding to rely on them for formation of new associations as well as communication with the rest of the community. However, failure to do that has resulted in accumulating more power into the hands of rural elites and widened the inequalities and marginalisation. Relying on local organisations, which were not very much trusted, to form the new organisations had raised many questions about the justifications of this approach. Meanwhile, some answers could be derived from the responses of the key informants in Chapter Nine, who revealed that development projects are usually concerned with making fast and quantitative achievements (DO-SSI, July/05/*Khartoum*). In this regard they rely on available sources of information, existing communication and representation bodies rather than investigating or trying to reach the inaccessible.

Many research participants believed that members of the farmers' unions and other related organisations, such as the Production Councils and farmers' companies were corrupt but were supported by their ethnic groups and were backed up by the government. The members of the unions used their knowledge and contacts to provide services to their people (kinship, friends and members of a tribe) but as explained by research participants they benefited themselves first. The union's budget, and other related items, such as cost of transportation, meetings' expenses and members' incentives were closed information. Whom they made contacts with and why, was also unknown (VNS-SSI, 11/2005). This form of representation restricted wider public engagement with formal institutions, blocked the flow of information

and created suspicion, tension and lack of trust. Moreover, there were no records or documents to show the roles, rights, responsibilities and constraints that affected the performance of these cooperatives. For ordinary people leadership means the ability to initiate, consult, mobilise resources, delegate power and campaign people to implement such activities (SAM-SSI, 11/2005).

A significant question that needed to be considered was if those who were in power are ready and happy to allow others to 'take part', make decisions, set agendas, manage and control resources (Blackburn and Holland, 1998:6). Those who are in power might not be ready to involve others or delegate power, especially in homogeneous communities, where other factors, such as courtesy and loyalty to their own people have great influence. A locality leader (*Umda*) in *Ahamda* explained proudly how representation and power work.

'In this scheme we have no conflicts and problems like some other schemes, I am the *Umda*, the *Sheikh*, and the chairman of all the organisations; the Cooperative, the Popular Committee, the Education Committee, the Scheme Board of Directors, member of the Productive Council, and member of the Farmers' Union in the White Nile State. It was always like that, I inherited this position. The leader always remains a leader. I offered advice, services and accommodation for IFAD staff when they visited the scheme and conducted any activities. However, IFAD offered me an opportunity to travel abroad and inside the country to learn from others experiences' (*Umda*-SSI, 11/2005).

The members of the cooperatives, despite the fact that some of them are illiterate, were trained and offered many chances to exchange experiences with similar institutions inside and outside Sudan. Thirty-three tenant's leaders visited Syria and Egypt (IFAD, 2002b:10). Exchanging visit groups within the project and with other communities outside the project was a useful practice but these opportunities benefited powerful individuals rather than the members of weaker groups and marginalised categories. The conventional approach to grassroots-level leadership training strengthened those who are powerful and provided them with further skills and information. These training opportunities could be better if directed towards some other members in order to control their leaders and disseminate information about the external system (Fernando, 1995:182).

### ***Involving Women in the Project***

Women in many villages are not involved in grassroots organisations or groups, such as education and religious committees. Therefore the formation of semi formal organisations, such as farmers' unions, village popular committee and cooperatives intended to guarantee the representation of women. The government designed the constitutions of the popular committees and the farmers' unions, while for cooperatives they were prepared by the project and the State Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Resources and Irrigation. The designers of these constitutions were fully aware that men, especially in rural areas, might not voluntarily open space for women to participate. Therefore the constitutions of all semi-formal organisations, such as village popular committees, farmers' unions and cooperatives insisted that women should be at least represented by two members. As explained earlier, women, in some communities, especially those of one tribal identity, do not mix with men in public meetings; their selection for the cooperatives was just a formality and a matter of applying rules. Female members in one of these cooperatives revealed that they heard about their selection for the cooperative but were not invited to attend meetings or informed about cooperative roles. They also confirmed that even if they had been informed and asked to attend they would not have done so, because it is not socially accepted. A female social worker, who was selected as a cooperative member, explained:

'I have been selected as a member in the cooperative but I never attended any meeting. No one asked me to come; even if they asked me to come I will not do that. I am a social worker, work in the city and mix with men but the situation in the village is different. Mixing with men during meetings does not look right. The *Umda* and others do what they want to do, no one can dare to ask them or criticise them' (SW-SSI, 11/2005).

The names of two women were always mentioned in the records of these organisations, but in reality no woman is involved in decision-making or in implementation of any related activities. This has been attributed to social traditions and customs that view the existence of women and men in the same committees as unacceptable and/or of no value if 'men can do the job'. A village leader in *Ahamda* confirmed that:

'We have elementary and secondary schools, most women are literate; many of them are university graduates, working as teachers in the village or in the nearby cities. However, they do not attend the public meetings nor are they involved in these organisations. We record their names according to the law but we do not ask them to come because they do not need to come, the men can do the work' (VL-SSI, 11/2005).

In response to this situation the project introduced the idea of establishing women's groups and provided them with some financial and technical support. Apparently establishing these groups as well as the presence of female staff had encouraged women to participate while the project was functioning but it did not address and resolve the main challenges. On the other hand, this case proved that rules and regulations alone would not govern people's actions, especially if they are linked to cultural norms.

Women's participation in public activities and semi formal organisations is slightly different in heterogeneous communities where many tribes live together in one scheme. In *Ganfaria* as well as in other similar schemes, where there were many ethnic groups, local organisations were formed by a fractional electoral system, through quota, meaning that each tribe was represented according to its size. The existence of heterogeneous groups in this scheme impacted on people's interaction and negotiations with the project. Some women, especially the educated ones, participated in the assemblies and committees as effective and influential members. Involvement of women in decisions about community affairs, especially in heterogeneous communities, seemed to be an outcome of internal conflicts. It was a tool for accessing the project resources and having a bigger share in local organisations. In other words, involvement of women in the local organisations supported by the project (cooperatives, farmers' unions) did not indicate that women in heterogeneous communities were in a better condition or more empowered in comparison to homogenous ones.

After the project stopped, women ceased participating in local organisations. If these women's groups had been sustained and the women initiated their own programme it could be said that there was a real change within the community and women were truly empowered. However, this did not occur.

In the White Nile society, traditional male leaders made decisions on behalf of the communities. Moreover, the social traditions are very strong and can hardly be challenged



by, and within, the community alone. It is important to understand the origin of prevailing values and traditions, and the logic or justification for adhering to them. Based on this, a strategy could be developed to face unjustified and oppressive acts. Developing the means and tools to address these complicated social issues requires a greater knowledge of communities' ideologies and beliefs as well as the ability to develop diplomatic ways to handle them.

### ***Capacity and Sustainability of the Project's Organisations***

The achievements and outcomes of these cooperatives were weak during the project time (UNOPS, 2001) and completely collapsed after the project stopped. UNOPS (2001) indicated that the members of the cooperatives lacked confidence and experience to develop self-reliant organisations, due to the fact that farmers' organisations in the White Nile State for a long time were completely dependent on the government to manage their affairs. However, through these new organisations (cooperatives), the project had failed to develop an emancipative strategy in order to open space for those who had been excluded in the past. The members of the farmers' organisations (who were again members of the cooperatives) had no capacity and accountability to learn from others' experiences and to transfer this knowledge into useful initiatives. As indicated before most of those members were illiterate and guided by their personal interests. The failure of these cooperatives was also attributed to social, tribal and political influence and interventions. The selection of their members was always based on ethnic and political criteria; therefore, the traditional leaders found ways through old and new organisations, such as cooperatives and popular committees.

Having broadly introduced the local communities and explored the project approaches the following section examined the various interventions and its outcomes.

### **Interventions and Outcomes**

The project implemented the following participatory components: scheme rehabilitation, credit, extension services, community forestry and community development. In the following sections the nature of these components and their outcomes will be explored.

## ***Scheme Rehabilitation***

The WNASP had provided support for rehabilitation of the pumps and civil works. The purpose of rehabilitation was to bring the schemes into better working condition through repairing and maintenance rather than replacing the existing units. In the project design it was assumed that the farmers in the irrigated agricultural schemes targeted by the project would voluntarily participate in the construction of pumps and bridges and the cleaning of canals.

The project mid-term review recommended that tenants should have some contribution in the rehabilitation, such as provision of local materials (sand, gravel, and stones) and labour. At the WNASP appraisal, the 'beneficiary contribution' was set at 10% of the scheme capital costs. Records show that there was no farmer contribution for the first tranche of schemes, and only 1% for the next tranches (UNOPS, 2001:44). The performance of tenants, in this area, was reported by the supervisory mission as unsatisfactory, which related to tenants attitudes and being dependent for a long time (UNOPS, 2001). The United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS) mission criticised the project document for not stating 'beneficiaries' participation' in cost, as a condition for eligibility of the project services (UNOPS, 2001:8). This criticism proved that despite the project interest in participation its document had failed to state explicitly the purpose and objective of adopting participation. It also revealed the perceptions of the supervisory development agency (the UNOPS) about participation and the 'participants'. UNOPS as a supervisory body perceived the 'project participants' as 'beneficiaries'. Moreover, using participation as a manipulative tool to force a specific form of contribution deprived the concept of its essence.

The project completion report (IFAD, 2002b:8) showed that after the first year it became clear that the farmers across all schemes were not committed or interested in participating in the rehabilitation activity. However, research participants revealed that farmers were not sure of the benefits they might gain (LP-FGD, 11/2005). Moreover, they indicated that the majority are poor and struggle for survival, therefore were unable to work for free (MF-SSI, 11/2005). The low level of tenants' participation in the rehabilitation programme suggests that collective participation, if not creating immediate benefits, could not easily take place among poor communities that struggle for survival.

The project report (IFAD, 2002b:7) showed that as a result of the rehabilitation programme, the hydraulic efficiency increased more than 60% in comparison to other schemes, which were 45%. This resulted in an increase of cultivated area from 5,752 *feddan* in the year 1996 to 35,064 *feddan*, which means that more benefits should have been gained. These figures, with reference to the supervisory mission's report and research participants' views, are quite questionable, because there are some other factors influencing the utilisation of this area, such as the availability of agricultural inputs, either through the government or the financial institutions. This will be examined through the credit component.

The UNOPS (2001:4/42) reported that engineering and design was assessed as poor and the quality of civil works as sub-optimal; no proper engineering was carried out prior to civil works execution. For example, in some schemes the new pumps remained idle and large areas could not be irrigated because the land was higher than the level of the rehabilitated canal. The report mentions more examples that showed the shortcomings in this component. The most important issue here is the perceptions of local people who were 'targeted' by this project. Neither local organisations nor individuals were involved or consulted when the new devices and maintenance of water pumps and bridges were carried out. Local people expressed their dissatisfaction and anger about the new changes. During a focus group discussion a farmer in one of the schemes voiced his view:

'The project engineers decided to rehabilitate the bridges by dumping some concrete material over the old ones. We tried to stop them, because this was not the right way to do it. They never listen. Now the situation is worse than before, we can hardly walk over the bridges. People always look for other places to reach their farms' (MF-FGD, 10/2005).

The project entered the field with pre-planned solutions and ignored the villagers' views about what should be done. The project was accused, by the research participants, of using unsuitable techniques to rehabilitate the bridges that connect the villages with irrigated land, which made using and moving through them more difficult than before. Apparently, the professionals were not willing to involve people or consider their knowledge.

### ***The Credit Component***

The project adopted a new financial strategy through an input supply and credit programme for financing agricultural and income generating activities through the Agricultural Bank of Sudan (ABS) and the Farmer Commercial Bank (FCB). The credit component presented 16.9% of the IFAD loan. The credit strategy is similar to what was adopted and implemented, later on, by IFAD-North Kordofan Rural Development Project. For the White Nile farmers this was their first experience dealing with agricultural finance through a bank, away from the Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Resources and Irrigation (MAAI). In the past the finance for agriculture, specifically for cotton, was managed through the MAAI. The project strategy was designed to introduce competition between ABS and FCB in the areas of services quality and attractiveness to clients. Competition between banks was reported during the first year. From the second year onwards, competition was completely relaxed and the two banks started to prepare a joint lending and repayment policy. It became clear that the two banks were concerned about getting their money back (SIO-SSI, 11/2005). In fact, the loan agreement stipulates that farmers groups will repay schemes assets and rehabilitation costs through ABS and FCB; repayment of the loan was assumed to be completed within 17 years. UNOPS (2001:6) reported that due to high cropping intensity and low productivity as well as farmers' demonstrated reluctance to repay loans, it is unlikely that full repayment can be achieved; however they suggested it would have been realistic to ask the farmers for a reasonable repayment level such as 20%.

When the WNASP started in 1996, different arrangements were made through the ABS and FCB. The two financial institutions utilised the group's financial intermediation approach. Seasonal crop loans were made to farmers' cooperatives and farmers' unions, which were responsible for distribution of the funds (loans) to farmers and collecting repayments for onward transmission to the bank. The banks decided not to make further loans to cooperatives or companies unless 100% repayment had been achieved on previous ones (SIO-SSI, 11/2005). While this system reduces the transaction costs of the banks, it penalises individuals who repay in full if other participants in their schemes do not repay.

The group approach was considered by the banks to be necessary for two inter-connected reasons: first, as scheme farmers do not hold individual land titles to the land they operate they are unable to provide collateral to qualify for individual loans; secondly the only collateral that can be provided by poor farmers in the project schemes consists of collectively owned assets such as pumping equipment. This implies that loans must also be collective. The banks also viewed group lending as a means to significantly reduce transaction costs and the number of staff in the first year. The system was implemented on a limited scale but the farms productivity was low and the farmers failed to repay the banks loans (IFAD, 2002b). The repayment rate was 48% for ABS and 42% for FCB. For women's groups the accumulated repayment rate is 70% for ABS and 56% for FCB (IFAD, 2002b: 18). Research participants indicated that during the first year the banks failed to release the loans at the right time, which led to a failure in that season.

'The Agricultural Bank of Sudan and the Farmer Commercial Bank did not deliver the loans in the right time. The community, the project management, the banks' staff and the farmers' organisations, were blaming each other for poor performance and low yield. The problem is that the farmers used the loans for other purposes, especially to survive and therefore failed to repay them' (SAO-SSI, 10/2005/*Kosti*).

The banks took serious steps to force the borrowers to repay the loans, some farmers were sent to jail and others were chased and threatened by local organisations (farmers' union and cooperatives). These actions created a bad image of the project and the banks. According to UNOPS (2001) the low repayment rates were attributed to the banks inability to make individual loans, low yields and output at farm level in the mentioned seasons, farmer inability and voluntary unwillingness to repay loans, late delivery of credit by the banks leading to poor cropping results due to highly centralised bank decision-making processes; and a general climate of mistrust between farmers and banks.

The banks' officials have different views regarding this situation. Interviews with the ABS and the FCB officials (SIO-SSI and IO-SSI, 10/2005) revealed that none of the schemes achieved 100% repayment in the two seasons, 1996/97 and 1997/98. Therefore the two banks' suspended lending operations from 1998/99 onwards. The ABS Senior Investment Officer (SIO-SSI, 10/2005) explained that the bank's studies showed that those who had knowledge and clear plans succeeded in making profitable projects and repaid their loans. However, the others had taken the loan because it was a chance and they did not make any

effort to have a successful investment. The officers explained that the banks wanted their money back and what happened was not their responsibility. Bank staff were talking about different projects other than agricultural activities. They indicated that the bank had no idea about the farmers' claim and that this was not the banks' (ABS and FCB) concern or responsibility; instead it should be the role of local organisations to present proposals for funds and follow the approval and submission of loans according to their agricultural calendar. The ABS and FCB argument could be right and they could not be asked to do professionals' and local organisations' jobs, but at the same time both banks employed investment officers, who were agricultural economists. This means that the bank staff who deal with farmers' business must be aware of the agricultural calendar and bank processes must allow swift payment of approved loans.

The experience with the microfinance programme indicates that applying new policies or strategies require studies and initial trialling, conditions that apparently were not considered by the project. Instead the new input supply and formal credit programme was introduced and implemented on a large scale before carrying out pilot studies.

On the other hand, women in the project area had their own experiences with the credit component. The *Ganfaria* scheme had experience with an informal credit programme that was introduced by the WNASP to support poor families and implemented under the supervision of the ABS, using a group guarantee. The group participants (FGE-FGD, 11/2005) revealed that the first group of twenty-five women applied to buy small carts that were used for transporting water from nearby pumps, and agricultural crops from the farms to the villages, a kind of work that was normally done by young boys. Those women succeeded in repaying back the loan, but after a while 23 of them sold their carts. Those who were interviewed explained that the boys had grown up and they had no one to do the work. Another group of 31 poor families borrowed 7,000-8,000 Sudanese diners (SDD) and bought two goats or sheep and managed to repay the loan. The last group was formed by twelve, mainly better-off families, who decided to buy cows that cost SDD 30,000-40,000 (US\$ 150-200) each. Those who bought the cows had bad experiences when ten of the cows died and the borrowers could not pay the money back according to the scheduled timetable. In general, those who were involved in raising sheep and goats benefited. I interviewed some of the borrowers about the benefits gained from the credit programmes. A female participant in

*Ganfaria* replied that using loans for buying carts or sheep was quite good but it was small and was made available only once. This female participant (FGE-FGD, 11/2005) explained that the ABS has decided to punish the whole community by declining all applications because some people failed to repay their loan.

The research participants agreed that the response of the banks to loan applications was very slow and did not enable timely cultivation. Therefore many people used the loans for other projects or to cover household's needs. Moreover, the distribution of loans to individual farmers within borrowing cooperatives was not closely monitored by the project to ensure transparent and equitable farmer selection (UNOPS, 2001). The cooperative and farmer organisations supervised the informal credit programme. People submitted the applications to these organisations and waited for approval. The committees studied and approved the loans and followed the repayment procedure. It seems that there were no clear criteria for identifying who should get a loan and instead other factors influenced the release and size of the loans. For example, during a focus group discussion a female participant (a government employee) who participated in the project activities reported her experience:

'The possibility for getting a loan as well as the size of the loan was influenced by personal, tribal and kinship relations. Poverty and neediness was never considered. In fact, all those who were better off borrowed more money. I am one of them; I borrowed SDD 35,000 to buy a cow. I discovered that I had to buy special fodder and pay for vaccination. After I did all that the cow died. Ten of us had the same experience. No one from the MAAI or the project told us why that happened. I continued to repay the bank from my salary. Some women failed to repay in time, therefore the bank decided to punish the entire village and stop financing any projects' (FGE-FGD, 11/2005).

This indicated that personal relations and ties could play a crucial part in shaping the development process, its operational aspects, inputs and outputs. Before the project stopped, research participants referred to some well-off people from wealthy and middle class categories that benefited more from various interventions, because they were able to access the project and financial institutions. This evidence was supported by UNOPS's (2001:21) findings which reported that credit to rural communities brought out certain negative impacts such as development of powerful centres within a community and upper level leadership monopolising credit and marginalising the poor. Added to this social and family relations among committee members had a negative effect on loan collections.

However, the experience with loans or micro-enterprises did not last for more than two seasons; most activities had either collapsed or were considered not worth the effort to keep going.

### ***Extension Services***

Due to social and developmental implications in the White Nile State, it was found that the participatory approach was most suitable for creating a tenant-financed extension service. However, the objective of creating a tenant-financed extension service was not achieved (IFAD, 2002b:10). As explained earlier, it appeared that the project ideology was relied on 'efficiency', which supported the government economic agenda. This agenda, as explained in the WNASP appraisal report (IFAD, 1996), was basically focusing on privatisation policy. To employ this policy internal and external training was conducted to empower the local organisations (farmers' unions, cooperatives and women's groups) to deal with financing the agricultural processes, including the extension services. The completion report (IFAD, 2002b:10/13) showed that the extension staff had achieved the following outputs: 15 field days, 22 workshops, 109 demonstration plots and distribution of 4,825 leaflets to 7,387 tenants in the project area. The report also showed that 210 group discussions and 247 training courses were organised along with several in-country and abroad tenants exchange visits.

Due to low literacy rate in some schemes and the absence of women from semi formal organisations, extension workers had emphasised on personal contact to disseminate the extension message and new technologies. In most cases, meetings with men and women were held separately. The extension workers and project development officers focused on convincing the 'beneficiaries' to adopt the project's proposed activities rather than involving them in planning, decision-making and evaluation, through which they could gain skills and interact with each other. A female extension worker explained:

'We lived in the villages, the accommodation was provided by the *Sheikh*. We spent a lot of time convincing people to accept the project's ideas and participate in the proposed activities. People used to see some of our activities, such as awareness programmes and nutrition classes as a waste of time. We noticed that people were very poor and worked hard to survive. (FE-SSI, 11/2005).



To ensure the long-term sustainability of the extension efforts, the project appraisal report asserted that farmers' organisations would begin to pay a portion of local costs, increasing each year. By year six they would bear all of the local costs (IFAD, 1996). The project expectations were based on creating empowered transparent and self-reliant organisations. Further, in 2002 the WNASP completion report stated that the objective of creating a tenant financed extension service was not achieved, but the resources provided by the project were assumed to offer good momentum for extension services to continue for the coming years (IFAD, 2002b:10). Three years later the research participants indicated that WNASP assets, such as cars and office equipment, were distributed among politicians, some government officials, and institutions. A former female development officer explained:

'I worked for the WNASP as a development officer. The project paid our salaries, provided car, fuel, extension material and some equipment for the community development centres. After the project stopped all the project cars and equipment were distributed among different government institutions, politicians and local leaders. Only one car was left for the agricultural extension, but there was no fund for fuel or spare parts in order to conduct further activities or follow what had been started' (FDO-SSI, 10/2005).

The White Nile project, despite its recorded outputs, had neither achieved the efficiency while it was functioning nor the sustainability as expected. The project designers did not think about limitations and risks, therefore they failed to identify alternative procedures and methods for protecting and utilising the project's assets and resources, in an efficient way.

Having examined the nature and outcomes of extension services the following sections look at the community forestry and community development components.

### ***Community Forestry***

The WNASP supported a community forestry programme. The Forests National Corporation (FNC) in the White Nile State offered some seedlings from their central nursery and seconded one of their extension specialists to work for the project. The project paid her a monthly allowance. The project village extension staff, as part of the community

development component, had helped in implementing different activities such as the construction and dissemination of improved fuel wood stoves and the establishment of village and school nurseries.

The WNASP completion report (2002b: 12-13) recorded a large number of forestry activities that had been achieved during the lifetime of the project. This included extension activities, plantation and establishment of community nurseries. These achievements are reproduced in table 6.2. However, the performance of the community forestry programme was evaluated by UNOPS (2001:6-7) as weak, only 21-23% of targets for community woodlots, shelterbelts and sand dune stabilisation activities had been achieved. Poor achievements were attributed to insufficient farmer interest, inadequate availability of water, choice of exotic species such as eucalyptus, high costs of planting and maintenance, and difficulties in plantation protection.

The FNC confirmed that there are some few scattered trees or limited windbreaks here and there. Apparently, there was lack of coordination between key agencies. A village nursery supervisor and a village extension officer reported a story of establishing and running village or school nurseries:

‘The project established the village nursery. It provided all the material and paid for labourers. I used to take care of this nursery and received a monthly incentive from the project. The project supplied me with seeds and plastic bags. When the seedlings were ready I distributed them to people free of charge. When the project stopped, my incentive was stopped as well. They told me to go to the Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Resources and Irrigation if I needed some material for the nursery. But who is going to pay the cost of my transport? Even if they bring the material here, why do I have to do that for free? Therefore I left everything and everything had disappeared’ (VNS-SSI, 10/2005).

‘Truly we were worried about the consequences of distributing the seedlings free of charge. We repeatedly informed the project management about our concerns and observations. We noticed that people did not care too much about protecting the seedlings as long as they could come every now and then and ask for another one. We suggested that people should pay a small amount of money for a seedling. Unfortunately, the project management refused our suggestions’ (FFEO-SSI, 10/2005).

**Table 6.2: Community Forestry: Project Achievements  
(1996-2001)**

<b>Activity</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>General Remarks</b>
<b>Forestry extension</b>		
• Formation of women's groups	44	10-15 members in each group.
• Workshops	25	
• Meetings	214	
• Symposia	36	
<b>Tree planting</b>		
• Community forests	256 (fed)	<i>Feddan</i> (fed) = 0.42 ha = 1.03 acre
• Lowlands plantations	284 (fed)	
• Shelterbelts	57.5 (fed)	
• Sand dune fixation	654 (fed)	
<b>Community nurseries</b>		
• Home nurseries	170	Produced 73,400 seedlings.
• Village nurseries	4	
• Schools nurseries	2	
<b>Improved fuel wood stoves</b>	8,805	Different models were produced.

Source: Produced from UNOPS (2001:34) and IFAD (2002b: 12/13-53-57).

Regarding the project's achievements in the community forestry programme, which were recorded in the project completion report, the Forests National Corporation (FNC) management in the White Nile State indicated that they have not been involved in or informed of activity that was planned or conducted by the project. They also explained that the FNC had not known of any of the nurseries, windbreaks or woodlots, which were mentioned in the project's final report except for the *El-Kunuz* nursery; this was left under their supervision.

The project adopted a different approach and did not try to learn from others' experiences or coordinate with those who encouraged and supported community efforts. A senior manager at FNC explained that:

'The FNC had announced a policy for supporting any community nurseries. We provided local groups, who planned to establish village nurseries, with plastic bags, seeds and technical assistance; all free of charge. Moreover, the FNC has no objection, but based on many experiences with these forms of community activities, we even encourage the community organisations to sell the seedlings at reasonable prices' (SM-SSI, 10/2005).

The project supported the establishment of two school nurseries and four village nurseries in the selected sites. According to a senior agricultural manager (SAM-SSI, 11/2005) the school nurseries along with village nurseries had completely collapsed and disappeared, except one, which was handed over to the Forests National Corporation before the withdrawal of the project. However, it could be said that the only thing that was left of the project in *Ganfaria* and *Ahamda* schemes was part of the community forestry programme in the form of windbreaks, community forested land and some trees that were distributed to households. Further, during focus group discussions in *Ganfaria* and *Ahamda* the women indicated that they stopped using the improved charcoal stoves or making the improved firewood stoves because they found it easier to buy and use the traditional stoves.

### ***Community Development***

The community development component focused on involving women in the project activities. The project adopted the women in development approach that emphasised the women's traditional reproductive role (Brohman, 1996:283/84). At the beginning the project provided women with loans through the ABS and the FCB. These loans were aimed at generating income through activities such as dairy cows, poultry, carts, goat rearing and food processing. This component also included nutrition, food processing and literacy classes. The project used women's groups and two women agents in each scheme as voluntary facilitators.

The women agents received more training in order to work as facilitators and maintain the sustainability of the programme. The project targeted women within the age range of 15-45 years old. The project records showed that 44 women training centres were established (IFAD, 2002b: 22), and various activities, especially training and lending, were implemented. These activities are shown in table 6.3. Hundreds of women participated in these activities. Regarding the total number of trainees, these numbers do not add up. The number of participants exceeds the actual number that attended because women attended more than one training session. The project provided the schemes with trainers, ingredients, and food processing and kitchen equipment to conduct the women's training programme. The research participants indicated that they had enjoyed and benefited from new information and the social interaction. They also revealed that after the project stopped all equipment was distributed among the members of local organisations. One of the participants commented:

'Not only the kitchen and food processing equipment, but even some parts of the pumps that were installed by the project as part of the rehabilitation programme were taken by some people and sold in the market. Everyone knew them but we could not report the cases to the police or the MAAI because those people are our relatives. Therefore we could not continue our activities, no equipment, no money and no technical staff to help' (FP-FGD, 11/2005).

**Table 6.3: Women's Programme (1996-2001)**

Activity	Number attended
<b>Training sessions</b>	
Literacy	1,057
Handicrafts	1,396
Nutrition and food processing	1,666
Tailoring and sewing	966
<b>Credit programme</b>	
	<b>Number/value</b>
No. of women borrowed	1,558
Loan value (SDD)	25,020,134
Loan recovery	63.1%

Source: Produced from UNOPS (2001:35-36) and IFAD (2002b:22-29).

The community development programme was conducted in community centres that were established to carry out the intended activities. In *Ahamda*, an old government building was used as a women's centre while in *Ganfaria* a donated house was used for that purpose. However, during my fieldwork the women's centres no longer operated. This can be attributed to the lack of financial and technical support.

It appears that women's groups and female agents were not empowered enough to sustain any of the project activities. Nevertheless the formation of women's groups created a space for women in the household, they gained knowledge and their involvement in micro credit activities had contributed to improved household functioning. Women were not directly involved in facilitating the credit procedures, as men-dominated organisations were dealing with banks. Apparently this form of participation did not challenge the gender division of labour in the society. Women's perceptions and choices, especially in the homogeneous community, were not presented in public and their participation in community affairs did not exist.

The WNASP has been like perhaps most development projects, planned and evaluated by outsiders, and beneficiaries have only been involved during the implementation phase. Dhamotharan (1995) explains that this top-down approach has several disadvantages: 1) designed projects may not coincide with a community's needs and priorities, especially with those of some unprivileged groups (e.g. women, poor); 2) local people are just seen as implementation tools; 3) local people do not feel responsible for the project, as they do not develop any kind of linkages, or technical capabilities that can sustain their participation. Research participants confirmed this argument. A planning officer at the Ministry of Finance and Labour Force who worked as a consultant for the WNASP blamed the project design for being top-down and did not consult those who were concerned. He stated that 'the project document did not respond to people's needs and priorities, moreover, its operational process maintained the exclusive environment' (PO-SSI, 11/2005). During a focus group discussion a male farmer stated what people expected from the project:

'During the project time we used to have big dreams, we made applications for establishing small enterprises for production of oil and processing of food. We thought we would get some health services and our schools would be supported but nothing of that has happened. The project chose to work with some people and left its assets to them' (MF-SSI, 10/2005).

The UNOPS (2001) report, which was prepared immediately after the completion of the project, criticised the project reports that focused only on highlighting achievements while ignoring problems, failures and impact assessment. The UNOPS (2001:11) suggested that WNASP records should include an impact assessment and an assessment of the prospects for sustainability. If the communities are encouraged to participate meaningfully in the establishment of project design as well as monitoring and evaluation through their real representative groups, participation could achieve the intended objectives. These objectives are efficiency, effectiveness, empowerment and sustainability.

The WNASP performance and outputs were monitored and assessed by the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS) and national government representatives. In fact, government representatives were mainly involved during field visits, leaving the preparation of reports to development agencies. However, local communities and many related institutions, such as the Forests National Corporation and the national banks, were neither involved in this process nor received copies of these reports (SM-SSI, 10/2005; SIO-SSI, 11/2005). Theoretically the

project had some non-material goal, which entailed empowerment. The project efforts in achieving this goal were not addressed in the project completion report, which indicated that the conventional evaluation procedure was basically dependent on qualitative measures. As it has been explained in Chapters Two and Three, people's perceptions and views can be reflected through participatory monitoring and evaluation, which could be achieved by adapting a process approach (Mosse, 1998:6). When adopting participatory approaches, monitoring and evaluation should be shared by all actors, considering the fact that people are able to evaluate their own inputs and achievements from their own perspectives (Schneider and Libercier, 1995b: 47-48).

At the time of this study the local communities and the State Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Resources and Irrigation (MAAI) were discussing the challenges that might face the poor farmers as a result of the government decision to withdraw from productive enterprises. The same scenario was adopted in 1996 by the WNASP on a large scale to support the government privatisation policy. Despite the failure of the WNASP credit programme, the government's current strategies are based on releasing the federal and state government from direct responsibilities; by encouraging local communities to deal with local financial institutions directly in order to develop themselves. The next section examines the impact of this decision in light of the WNASP's experiences.

### **New Government Policy: The Ignored Lesson**

The WNASP assigned the credit component to Agricultural Bank of Sudan and Farmer Commercial Bank in 1996/97 to enhance privatisation and replace the old system that was managed by the MAAI in the White Nile State. The farmers organised themselves into cooperatives in addition to old organisations such as farmers' unions and productive councils. As explained earlier, the new experience had failed, therefore in 1998 the State Government and the MAAI established what was called the Agricultural Support Fund (ASF) locally called *Sanduq* to deal with financing agricultural operations. The UNOPS report (2001) criticised the formation of the ASF and accused it of sending a contrary message to what had been addressed by the project's objective of supporting privatisation and fostering self-reliance. The ASF started to finance the farmers and to provide maintenance of the irrigation schemes and agricultural extension services. In fact, the ASF also had some difficulties with farmers' organisations. An ASF officer (SAO-SSI, 10/2005) explained that local leaders

(members of semi formal organisations) created many problems and criticised the ASF for not allocating more funds for their organisations. The local leaders used this money to cover the members' expenses, in form of incentives, transportation and accommodation costs. The same ASF officer also revealed that ordinary farmers had no idea of these issues and their representatives never informed them. The existence of these forms of incentives justified the competition and conflict around local organisations' membership, and explained why some members stayed for decades and held many positions at a time.

In 2004 the Federal Government decided to adopt a complete privatisation of the White Nile irrigated schemes (the previous WNASP sites) and therefore terminated the Agricultural Support Fund (ASF) because the cultivation season in 2004/05 would be the beginning for farmers' organisations to take full responsibility of their agricultural and community development activities.

At the time of this fieldwork the Agricultural Bank of Sudan (ABS), based on its previous experiences in mid 1990s through the WNASP, refused to finance the farmers from the banks resources. Therefore the Federal Ministry of Finance and National Planning decided to finance the farmers in the White Nile State, only for one season, through the ABS. An ASF officer (SAO-SSI, 10/2005) explained that the government philosophy was based on the fact that agriculture is a farmers' responsibility and those farmers should manage the financial and all related marketing aspects by themselves. The same officer revealed that neither the specialists nor the farmers had been consulted about this sudden decision. During interviews, research participants showed concern and worry about this decision and raised the following objections. Firstly, the farmers' organisations lacked management and administrative skills and experiences. In addition there were internal conflicts, corruption and a lack of transparency. Secondly, the strategic thinking of the national banks was basically investment. The crucial issue here was the farmers' lack of confidence as well as their previous experience with the ABS lending' procedures. This meant that a similar scenario to the one during the WNASP time could be repeated again. Thirdly, the exclusion of the State Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Resources and Irrigation (MAAI) would deprive the farmers of the limited services that were provided through the ASF such as extension services, timely provision of inputs, and close supervision of the implementation. Fourthly, and most importantly, despite its ongoing claim about decentralisation and participation of local



communities in decisions that affect their lives, the central government still continues to make decisions on behalf of the state authorities and local communities.

Local communities as well as the MAAI were concerned about the impact of this decision, which might repeat the WNASP experience, an experience that was neither comprehensively assessed nor learned from. This indicated that policies and decisions could be made without involving those who might have been affected. Local communities in the White Nile State, through the WNASP as well as other development interventions, had developed a comprehensive experience that would offer a base for making better decisions in the future. The key issue here was the intention and willingness to benefit from these experiences.

Having described the project interventions that adopted people's participation the following section presents the factors that influenced the project's ability to achieve its planned objectives.

### **Influencing Factors for the WNASP's Outcomes**

There were many factors that affected the WNASP's journey. Some are related to the project's internal strategy while others are related to community and government institutions. Exploring these constraints could provide information on the difficulties faced by local communities when dealing and interacting with external development interventions and offer answers to one of the research questions regarding the factors that have influenced people's participation in development projects.

#### ***Project-related Factors***

The project appraisal report encouraged participatory communication but in practice the project's partners' (ABS/FCB) policy and traditional leaders controlled the development process. In general, there is a need for a better flow of information between projects, communities and related local institutions. This requires networking and linkages between different development actors but links did not exist before and were not encouraged by the WNASP. The WNASP had adopted an easy and safe communication channel when choosing to approach the communities through local leaders who are not fully trusted by local communities. By adopting this approach many realities were concealed and many who were powerless or marginalised were left out.

The project staff were also concerned with making some tangible achievements. In order to save time and hoping to ensure wide scale acceptance the fieldworkers and project management had aligned themselves with some individuals and community groups. This limited the participation of the marginalised and poor groups and ended up empowering those who were already powerful.

It also appears that the national banks, as partners, had no clear plans or mechanisms to communicate and to deal with poor or illiterate customers. This had attributed to shortcomings of the WNASP's credit strategy that relied completely on the Agricultural Bank of Sudan (ABS) and the Farmer Commercial Bank (FCB) conditions of service. Both ABS and FCB did not differentiate between funding the agricultural activities and other investment projects. Farming activities were normally controlled by a rigid timetable application system, which was well known by farmers and agricultural extension workers. Any delay in carrying out the planned farming operations and failure to make the inputs (capital, seeds and fertilizers) available in time could create a disaster, and this is what happened during the first two years of the WNASP. This was one of the valid and strong arguments that were made by specialists at the MAAI and local participants who expressed their concerns about the suitability of ABS and FCB as lenders if they did not consult the farmers and the professionals.

### ***Government-related Factors***

Research participants perceived the lack of responsiveness of government officials and weak extension services as crucial constraints that affected development processes in their schemes. The World Development Report pointed out that poor people all over the world view government institutions as unaccountable, distant and corrupt (World Bank, 2001b). However, an absence of extension services was related to limited resources and/or government policies. A female development officer explained how government authorities view extension services.

'All the extension services in the state, such as agriculture, forestry, health and environment, are seen of little value. Therefore no budget would be allocated for them and it was always left for international NGOs and development projects to plan and carry them out on behalf of the government' (FDO-SSI, 11/2005).

Another research participant pointed out that during the existence of the project, at least, there were some officials who used to visit them:

‘Government institutions have nothing to do with us; they never provide services or respond to any request. At least, we used to see some of their staff when IFAD was here. Now no one sees them’ (MF-SSI, 12/2005).

The government can interfere in some aspects such as election of communities’ representatives. Some participants considered that the government is mainly concerned about allaying the elites and powerful leaders as through them the government can control the majority who are poor and powerless. A senior government official, during an interview asked me to turn off the tape recorder but made sure I wrote down his statement in his own words. He revealed that:

‘The MAAI in White Nile State supervises with other institutions the election of farmers unions. Last year, before the election, we received instructions, from one of the highest federal political leaders, informing us that they want Mr. X ‘an influential tribal leader’ to be among the elected list’ (SAO-SSI, 10/2005).

The formation of local organisations in the White Nile State was influenced by the socio-political environment, while its contributions were limited by socio-economic factors. There is a belief that a free and democratic process is the key factor in the selection of community representatives. However, under some circumstances, particularly when the level of illiteracy, ignorance and sense of inferiority is high, even a free election might not bring real representatives. People unconsciously might accept or select those who deprive them of their rights and contribute to their misery.

The selection of higher-level officials, for certain positions, is based on their tribal status and influence. The present government intensively adopted this policy in order to avoid the emergence of any conflict and to gain the support of influential individuals or groups. The government officials have little interest in challenging the situation where community representative sare always the traditional leaders of the biggest tribes. A senior officer of the State Government explained that:

'This situation was legitimised by the federal government's policies, and it got out of control. If the traditional leaders or local institutions were not happy they could reject the appointed ministers. The ministers concern was to keep their jobs and not upset the influential local people '(SGO-SSI, 10/2005).

Representation and power relations in the White Nile State are governed by socio-political factors. This revealed the importance of social norms and government roles in determining the nature and composition of community organisations. It also appeared that allocation of resources and provision of public services were significantly influenced by government's policies.

### ***Community-related Factors***

In the White Nile society powerless people have been dominated for a long time by powerful groups and have been overtaken by the mentality of dependence. This reduces their capability to act and make their own decisions while those who enjoy the power and status oppose the change (Freire, 1970; Mathur, 1995). Moreover, the project did not address or challenge the dominant power relations within the community. Those who have little power, such as women and minority groups, are usually excluded from decision-making processes and have limited chance to express their views, needs, and priorities. For example, due to unchallenged traditions as well as corruption and lack of resources women's groups in *Ganfaria* and *Ahamda* schemes were dissolved and the community development centres were closed after the project stopped.

Even if a member of a minority group has been elected or selected for any semi organisations (farmers' unions, productive councils, and cooperatives) the biggest community groups might not back that person later on. A senior agricultural officer at the Agricultural Support Fund, MAAI explained his experiences with people in some heterogeneous communities:

'Through the ASF we had many difficulties with loan delivery and repayment. Tribal conflicts and power relations created most of these problems. Unfortunately, this situation was maintained by passivity of the majority who are not capable of confronting their local leaders or adjusting this negative environment. We had the case of a chairman of one of the Production Councils, who guaranteed those who borrowed from the ASF and failed to repay. We decided to put this man in jail in order to motivate his people to repay the loan. When no one tried to help him, we decided to investigate and find out what was going on. They told us that their

community was formed of nine tribes and he was from the smallest one, and no one would help him, because no one wanted him from the start' (SAO-SSI, 11/2005).

Diversity of interest and interests groups in a small area like the White Nile schemes may lead to absence of accountability and solidarity. Under these circumstances selected or elected representatives succumb to human traits and become less responsible and accountable to interest groups to which they do not belong (Barrett, 1995:100). Moreover, limited or lack of education and government policies have deprived local people from being assertive and resisting the traditional leadership control. A government official who was transferred to the area from another state observed that:

'Most traditional leaders send their children to study in the capital or abroad, but they never make any effort to establish or improve the conditions of elementary schools in their villages' (SGO-SSI, 11/2005).

The research participants identified corruption and mismanagement of public resources, by urban elites and tribal leaders, as a constraint to development efforts. A research participant from *Ahamda* scheme revealed that those leaders could misuse public assets. He explained how ordinary people reacted when a corrupt act took place:

'A member of a farmers' union sold some of the equipment that belonged to the community. He is a member of our group (tribe); if we report the case to the police it would be a big shame for our tribe in the region' (MP-SSI, 11/2005).

A senior agriculturist confirmed the same practice by stating that:

'During a discussion with members of a farmers' union, I was shocked, when they informed me that it was lawful to take what they called 'government's assets' and use it for their own benefit. We discussed this issue in an official meeting and we proposed some measures to control this attitude' (SAO-SSI, 10/2005).

Another senior agricultural manager explained how the extension staff at the MAAI responded:

'Since last year we decided to get help from religious scholars, because many traditional leaders told us that everyone owns these public assets. For example you can borrow from the government and never repay back that money. Or you can sell

the pump that was installed by the government and it is all right. Therefore, we invited some religious scholars to accompany the extension workers, during the agricultural extension sessions, and advise people about the importance of solidarity and unity. Most importantly we wanted them to advise people about honesty when dealing with public assets. The scholars started to teach people and advise them that taking government assets and refusing to repay loans were unlawful acts. During these sessions some leaders confessed that they never knew this before' (SAM-SSI, 11/2005).

The people in these areas were very sensitive towards loans. Their values and traditions do not accept denying or delaying the repayment of loans. These traditional values were not adhered to, when asked to repay the ABS and FCB loans which were seen as government or external agency money. It seemed that people's previous experiences have shaped their images of external development assistance. As a result of these experiences people developed double standards when interacting with externally funded initiatives.

'Some people think that they do not have to pay back the loans, because it is the government or agency's money. Moreover some people believe that the projects should pay for everything. This thinking was developed sometime ago when international NGOs and projects, especially during the drought disaster in the 1980s, entered the area and gave food, medicine and agricultural inputs for free' (SIO-SSI, 11/2005).

Illiteracy and lack of awareness also reduced people's capacity. It deprives people of self-confidence and ability to organise themselves, seek resources and overcome a sense of inferiority. It also re-enforced the concept and sense of unconscious loyalty to local leaders who may not be fully committed to their communities, a situation that can be overcome through education and awareness.

To overcome these shortcomings people should be consciously aware of their rights and responsibilities. They must also be empowered if they have to challenge the oppressive and corrupt situations. People must also be able to attain self-confidence, self-assertiveness, moral, courage and group solidarity, developing a collective and democratic decision-making system as well as developing higher aspirations for themselves and their communities.

## Summary and Conclusion

This chapter presented the experiences of the White Nile Agricultural Services Project. It focused on exploring and examining the outcomes of the components that had been implemented within the participatory development framework. The interactions between the stakeholders as well as the factors that influence participation have been the focus throughout this case study.

In the project sites it was found that there are factors or conditions such as existence of many ethnic groups and distrusted leaders, which create divisions and power conflicts within the community. Despite this reality the WNASP relied on rural elites and powerful members who are members of semi-formal grassroots organisations (established under supervision of the government) to facilitate the establishment of new organisations and manage the flow of resources into the community. This had negatively influenced the extent and quality of communities' participation.

Many people participated in the project with high expectations. However the following factors have influenced the extent and quality of their participation: ethnic conflicts and personal interests, lack of networking and linkages between various development actors, particularly the primary stakeholders and government agencies, failure to address or challenge the power relations within the community and failure of financial institutions to develop innovative plans and mechanisms when dealing with poor and illiterate customers. Moreover people's previous experiences with international relief organisations have also shaped their images and influenced the way they interact with the project.

This case showed that traditions had constrained women's participation in the influential community development organisations. However, the hiring of female staff encouraged the local communities to accept women's participation in the project activities through women's groups.

The findings of this case study raise a concern about indigenous knowledge and consultation of local communities as the project engineers did not accept the villagers' opinions and ideas about new technical devices. This has resulted in locals' distrust and doubt about the technical capabilities of the staff, especially after the failure of the interventions.

From this case study I will argue that there are three challenges that face participatory development efforts in the White Nile State. Firstly, to establish accountable relationships between the government agencies and ordinary people. Secondly is to have grassroots organisations in which all members of the communities have equal rights and responsibilities. And finally there is also a need to encourage and support the establishment of networking and linkages between local community organisations, national and international organisations, financial institutions and government authorities.

The WNASP's experience provides some lessons for IFAD and other development agencies. However before adopting or rejecting any of this project's approaches or techniques, an in-depth analysis of socio-economic and environmental conditions in a certain setting should be conducted. The IFAD central unit in Sudan (KC-SSI, 07/2005) explained that because of the limited success achieved in the WNASP, some new approaches and mechanisms were adopted in the North Kordofan Rural Development Project (NKRDP). The following two chapters will explore and analyse the participatory development experiences of the NKRDP and see how, and if, these new participatory approaches and mechanisms work.



# **Chapter Seven: North Kordofan Rural Development Project: Indigenous Participatory Organisations and Practices**

## **Introduction**

Chapter Six explored and analysed the experiences of the White Nile Agricultural Services Project. It demonstrated that local organisations and power relations are key factors in implementing successful participatory development programmes. Thus there is a need to understand the social norms, and nature and capacity of local organisations in the area where the North Kordofan Rural Development Project (NKRDP), the primary case study in this research, had been implemented by the same development agencies, IFAD and the Sudan Government.

The objective of this case study (NKRDP) is to understand the nature of interactions between local communities and development providers and identify the factors that promoted or constrain people's participation. This would also contribute to identifying ways that may enhance the outcomes of participatory development projects in Sudan and therefore answer the main research question.

This case study will be reported in two chapters, Seven and Eight. This chapter introduces the North Kordofan Rural Development Project, and examines its organisational structure and staffing system. It also explores the socio-cultural and economic environments in the project sites. In order to gain a better understanding of the nature and potential of the NKRDP's interventions Chapter Eight will examine the approaches and mechanisms that were employed by the NKRDP. In this chapter and the following chapter I will use the term 'the project' to refer to the North Kordofan Rural Development Project, which represents the major case in this research. The project is under direct supervision of IFAD but the various stages were intended to be implemented through complete collaboration with the State Government of North Kordofan.

This chapter starts with an outline of the project context and its organisational structure and staff. Following this is a description of the physical, economic and political settings of North Kordofan (the project site). The communities' priorities, needs and challenges are

highlighted, and the state government's new development policy and its efforts in adopting a new participatory strategy are examined. Indigenous participatory concepts and representation issues are then the subject of the following two sections.

## **The Project Context**

The idea of the North Kordofan project emerged as a result of the consequences of recurring droughts in North Kordofan State (NKS) during the years 1984-1990. The Government of Sudan made a request for IFAD to fund some rural development activities in the area. During the years 1990 to 1993 IFAD missions conducted several visits to Sudan and arranged for a project appraisal to be prepared by a Sudanese consultancy firm. In 1999 the project's agreement was approved and signed by the Government of Sudan and IFAD, and the loan approval was finalised in 2000. The project was implemented in 2001 and will continue until 2007/8. As part of this agreement the Islamic Bank offered to contribute US\$9,100,000 for the construction of *El-Obeid-Bara* road, which linked the capital of NKS and *Bara* city. The total cost of the project was US\$14,566,500 (IFAD, 2005:1). It was assumed that the project's 'beneficiaries' would contribute 8.2% of the funds. Their contribution was calculated on the basis of labour, land and money through the local revolving fund. The project worked in two localities (*Um-Ruwaba* and *Bara*) and targeted 139,000 households and this is shown in Table 7.1. IFAD Reports (2004:4) showed that only 17,600 households were directly involved while others were benefiting from the provided services.

The overall goal of the project is to improve the living standards of targeted communities, assure their food security, and enhance resilience to drought and any natural disasters they may face (IFAD, 1999:1). Specific objectives include increasing the capacity of village committees to plan, execute and manage development projects, establishing support systems to assist communities in promoting communal natural resource management and creating sustainable participatory financial institutions.

Based on these objectives the project operates through the following components:

- 1) Community development, which includes mobilisation, awareness and training;
- 2) Utilisation and development of natural resources;
- 3) Rural finance and credit, and establishment of a revolving fund mechanism; and

- 4) Institutional capacity building at different levels (community and related government institutions).

**Table 7.1: The NKRDP Sites: Population and Targeted Communities**

Locality	Total Population	No. of Households	%
Um-Ruwaba	541,000	91,740	66
Bara	279,000	47,260	34
<b>Total</b>	<b>820,000</b>	<b>139,000</b>	<b>100</b>
Rural population is 84%.			
Total project area is 40,000 sq. km.			
Number of villages targeted by the project 320 (118, 000 households).			
Number of villages reached by the project 168 (70, 400 households).			
Number of households in the project villages 100-500.			

Source: Prepared from the Project Annual Reports (IFAD, 2004:4-6).

The relationship between the project and local government authorities is based on both parties' concerns and interests. Thus the project's planning system is conditioned by local government's perceptions and interests in achieving benefits. Al-Hardallu (2002:131) asserts that the local governments in Sudan are under criticism because of their poor performance and limited achievements. The State Government concern is to have a project that could deliver inputs with significant impact on livelihood and create a participatory development environment (KD-SSI, 07/2005). Accordingly, it is an opportunity for the government of North Kordofan State to have a project that might achieve some form of development. This understanding has framed the relationship between the project and the local authorities. As part of this unique relationship and on behalf of local communities the project negotiated with the local government authorities and succeeded in finalising some issues, which facilitated later on the hiring process of a large number of fieldworkers and approval of a new constitution for community development organisations (established by the project).

### ***The Organisational Structure***

The North Kordofan Rural Development project involves several actors; the implementing agency, local participants, and state and financial institutions. It also revolves around main operational themes, such as training, material supply and technical support. Fig 7.1 illustrates how the organisational structure of the project is similar to bureaucratic government institutions. The project has duplicated its staff, particularly at the state and locality levels. In

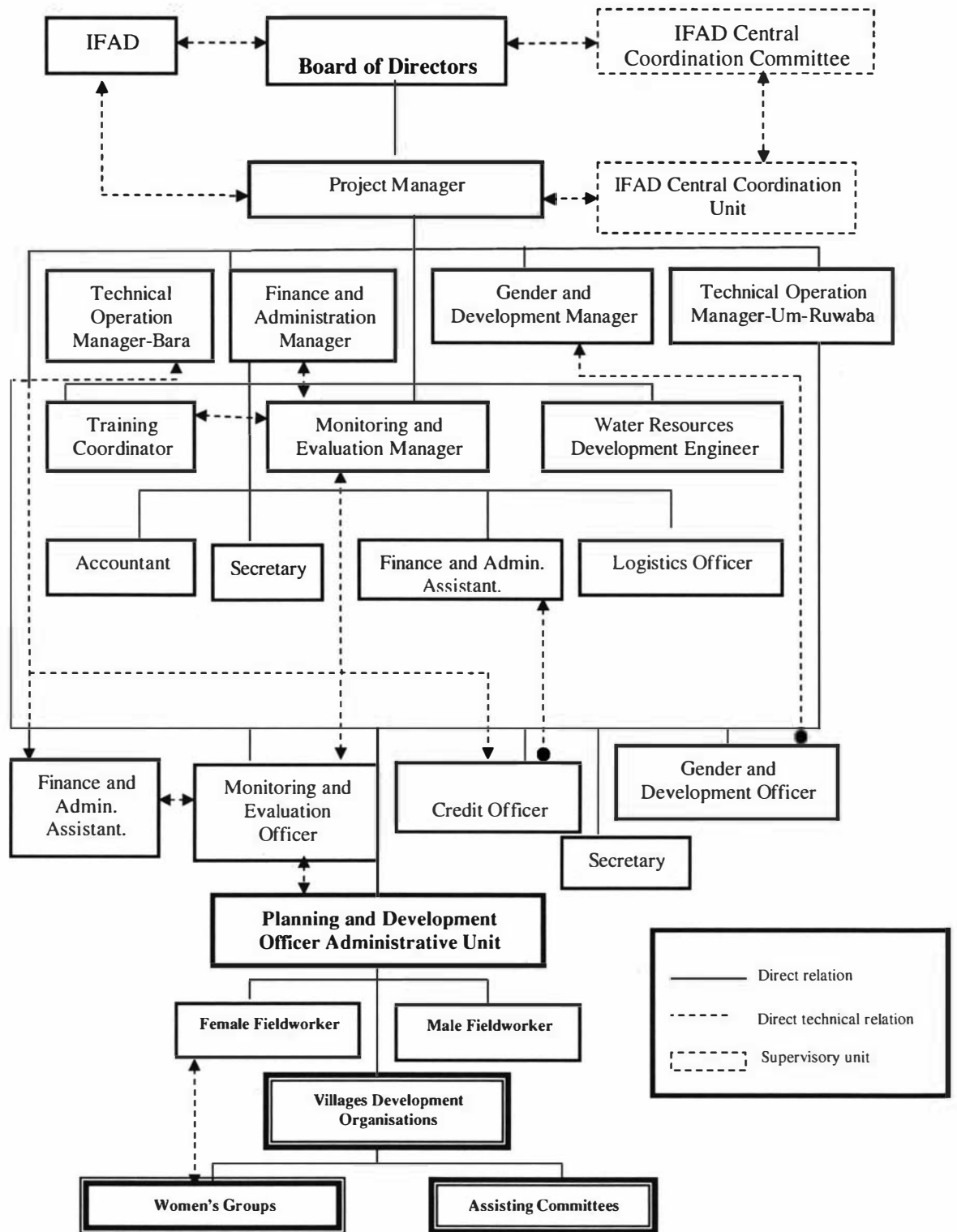
*El-Obeid* (the state capital) there are the Project General Manager and four other technical assistants who are identified in the areas of monitoring and evaluation, gender and development, training, and administration and finance managers, in addition to the secretary and other support staff. This scenario is repeated again at the locality level in both *Um-Ruwaba* and *Bara* cities, the centres of the localities. Under the supervision of each locality there are a number of technical units, each unit engages directly with local communities. The technical units are the most important part in the project organisational structure. These technical units are directly linked to communities at village level. Each unit is headed by one planning and development officer and includes a number of assistants who deal with gender and development, natural resources, rural credit and the *Sandug*. The project used the term '*Sandug*' to refer to the village revolving fund, provided by the project, as informal credit.

### ***Staff Unity and Interaction***

The project staff are all Sudanese. Both technical and field staff have different specialties, such as agriculture, natural resources, veterinary and geography. The management and senior staff have experience with other organisations and attended several training courses and workshops outside Sudan. They are employed and paid by IFAD, and stationed either in *El-Obeid* or in *Bara* and *Um-Ruwaba*. At the state and locality levels all the staff have computers, and the offices are equipped with all the required facilities such as, Internet, fax photocopying machines and number of cars. On the other hand, the junior staff are mainly new graduates and work as fieldworkers at the technical units. They are responsible for implementation, monitoring and follow-up of all the project interventions at village level. The project pays them a daily topping, SDD 1,200, when working in the villages.

The technical unit consists of 25-30 villages (IFAD, 2005 and fieldwork interviews, 2005). The unit's staff visit all of these villages at least once a month. This puts a burden on the field staff who work six days a week and spend five days in the villages. The working day starts from 8 o'clock in the morning until 8 o'clock in the evening. The technical units have only one car, no computer or communication facilities, and no supporting staff. This means that beside the technical tasks they also have to do the finance and administration work. The staff spend more hours during the night either in the office or at home writing reports. They use carbon paper to make copies and send the original to the locality or the state offices.

**Figure 7. 1: Organisational Structure of NKRDP**



Source: Translated from the project records (IFAD, 2005)

The researcher was able to observe the daily schedule of the staff and record their interaction and discussion with members of villages' committees and the villagers. The management and technical staff, who are stationed at the state and localities headquarters, do not play a significant role at the field level. The field staff have also expressed their frustration at lack of training, poor incentives for good work and limited resources available for doing the work or supporting the field activities. During a focus group discussion one of the female key staff at field level (technical unit) in *Um-Ruwaba* recorded her experience with the project:

'We work under very hard conditions. We do the work and the senior staff come to enjoy looking. They only come for visits or to accompany external missions and get paid SDD 2,000 a day while we get only SDD 1,200. In the unit we do not have financial authority. If there is something urgent we have to stop the work and send someone in the car to get the permission and approval. They always give us a very hard time. They repeatedly request reports that have been sent before and we have to prepare them again in handwriting. They send visitors and ask us to take them to see some areas which are not scheduled in our routine visits and that distract our programme. The good thing about the project was that it helped us to get government jobs. Everyone here is thinking to return back to the government after we have been employed, because our counterparts in the government institutions work only six hours a day and most of them have a better working environment and training opportunities' (KFO-FGD, 09/2005/*Um-Ruwaba*).

Another female fieldworker in *Bara* added:

'We do all the work and they get all the benefits. We only hear that the project staff (senior staff) traveled here and there, attending courses and workshops. We see them only when they come to visit activities or accompany some important visitors and IFAD's missions. They have cars, computers, fax and photocopying machines and Internet facilities but we have nothing except one car to drive us all around the thirty villages on daily trips' (FFW-SSI, 08/2005/*Bara*).

It was observed that the fieldworkers are frustrated and have a sense of being used and abused by the project. Most of them have two to three years working experience and joined the project as trainees or volunteers. The project made a promise to help them get government jobs. For the last three years, the project management has worked with the state government to create jobs and allocate budget for employing these groups (the fieldworkers) and in 2004 the State Government employed them and paid their salaries (IFAD, 2004:5). Apparently, the risk of losing their jobs no longer exists. Therefore the fieldworkers started to express their dissatisfaction and frustration. They revealed that there is no procedure through

which they can openly express their concerns. They are not capable of addressing these issues, which criticise the senior staff or the project assistance. Some of them revealed that they hope one day to get senior jobs with other IFAD projects, therefore if they decided to confront the situation there might be negative consequences for their future career. However many of them might choose to withdraw peacefully. Meanwhile, the NKRDP would face a great risk if the trained field staff decided to move out because of the workload, poor incentives and stressed working environment.

There is also a contrast in the thinking between the two groups; for example, the project senior staff perceives participation as a tool for implementing activities and ensuring success. They always present the positive side of the project to impress outsiders. They use encouraging and reinforcing means to ensure people's participation within the strategic framework of the project. In this regard they are very much concerned about making tangible achievements. In contrast to this the field staff who are originally from the project area and are government employees, view participation as a way through which local communities deserve to be equipped with suitable training and resources to develop their areas. They also believed that the project should coordinate with local NGOs who are ready to help. These conceptions emerged as a result of their daily contact with local communities and other development providers. The field staff were fully aware of people's ideas and opinions about the project's interventions, inputs and outputs. A female development officer confirmed:

'The outcomes of our efforts and these daily visits are very small because the resources, which are made available for development, are too limited. In most cases we go to the villages and we have nothing to offer. We can feel that we are not welcome' (FDO-SSI, 09/2005/ *Bara*).

Apparently the field staff do not share the senior staff sense of belonging to one organisation, and are not free of fear to address the development agency and the project management about the issues concerning them or the community.

The following section describes the NKRDP sites and identifies insights for local participatory organisations and practices. This would enable us later on to explore the potential of the Village Development Organisations (VDOs), which were established by the project, and their ability to mobilise resources and encourage people's participation. It would

also help us to understand people's ideas and visions about the project interventions and its participatory approaches and mechanisms.

## **Describing the North Kordofan Setting: An Overview**

### ***General Features***

North Kordofan State (NKS) is typical of the Sahelian zone, which is characterised by low rainfall (350 mm/year) that varies enormously over space and time. It suffers from the increasing frequency and severity of drought that occurred from 1970 to 2004 and resulted in one of the most noticeable famines in recent Sudan history, during the years 1984/85. This vulnerable situation has encouraged many relief organisations to offer their assistance free of charge. Later on, these relief organisations have been blamed for creating negative images about external assistance and development agencies, because they treated people as beneficiaries and relief receivers rather than participants or partners (SMN-SSI, 07/2005 NKRDP).

North Kordofan State has the potential of natural capital; land, water and biological resources, such as trees and pasture, but these resources are at great risk as a result of desert encroachment and drought (Egeimi, 2001:6). Kordofan state has a reasonable financial capital in term of livestock and forest resources, especially acacia gum, but it lacks access to credit and physical capital, such as roads, and electricity. The state is also rich in terms of social capital; there are large numbers of grassroots organisations, a university and research institutions of high reputation, academic and regional organisations, and large numbers of professionals who work in the capital or abroad and are committed to their people

The inhabitants of North Kordofan are of very mixed blood - Arab, Egyptian, Turkish, Levantine and Negro. They all speak Arabic. The most dominant tribes are the *Gawama*, who own most of the gum-producing farms and *Dar Hamid* and the *Bederia* who live around El Obeid (the capital of North Kordofan state). Among those settled tribes, people still classify themselves into smaller groups. The region is also occupied by some nomads, such as *Baggara* and *Kabbabish*. The term *Baggara* is a collective name applied to all cattle-herding tribes, who occupy a wide area, from Kordofan, Mid-Western Sudan, to Darfur in the far Western Sudan and extending to neighbouring Chad. They are a collection of seven major tribes: *Hawazma*, *Hamr*, *Messiria*,



*Rizagat, Ta'isha, Habbaniya*. All *Baggara* have close physical characteristics, costumes, dance, religion, food, and in general a common culture and way of life. However, many of the *Hamar* have settled down in villages. The *Kabbabish* depend upon sheep, goats and camels. They are centred in North Kordofan but overlap into Northern and Darfur regions.

The majority of the population are settled farmers depending on dry-land farming for the cultivation of subsistence crops (millet and sorghum) and cash crops (sesame, groundnuts, gum arabic and hibiscus). Many households also own a small number of animals (goats and sheep) as a source of milk and meat, which are also considered as protection against crop failure. Some wealthy groups raise large number of sheep and camels for cash. According to Hassan (2005:3) about 36% of the farmers' households have a secondary occupation as a subsidiary source of income, such as occasional labours, carpentry and carpentry for men. Women are involved in activities such as handicraft, food and tea making. The cash return whether from private gum Arabic and seasonal farm is basically benefiting the primary producers. However, people still share these products with those in need whether relatives, neighbours or poor families. This sharing is practiced with concern and enthusiasm within the traditional *Takaful* (social justice and solidarity) framework.

### ***Communities' Needs and Challenges***

The rural areas of North Kordofan are characterised by widespread poverty, little or no adequate basic human needs and support infrastructure, high dependence on subsistence agriculture and lack of job opportunities. Most villages in the area suffer from shortage of water, limited or poor education and health services, and lack of markets and storage facilities.

Water availability as well as quality is very much a concern for everyone. The main sources of water for domestic use are hand pumps, shallow and deep wells, and water ponds. The main problems related to water are pollution, severe shortage, especially during the summer season, and cost of spare parts, mainly for water pumps. The project area lies in the arid zone where provision of adequate and safe water supply is a pre-requisite for all project developmental activities. Sometimes people, particularly women and children, have to walk more than five kilometers to reach water yards (Mukhtar, 2002:8). A sustainable water supply has always been identified by communities as a main problem and a first priority, Mukhtar (2002) identifies the major constraints that face the provision of drinking water:

lack of financial resources; lack of appropriate technologies; and lack of a proper management system. Mukhtar proposes the replacement of the existing technology by electrical and submersible pumps in order to have a good quantity and quality of water. Research participants indicated that they spent a great amount of resources in digging wells and searching for adequate sources. They raised funds and contributed their own labour to construct wells and dig shallow ponds.

The second priority is education. Most villages have primary schools but they are not large enough to serve the number of school-age children and all of the schools suffer from a shortage of teachers, equipment and books (Hassan, 2005). Some boys and girls have to go to towns or big villages to attend secondary schools, in fact, if the village has no primary school girls are not allowed to go to study in the nearby villages. The research participants justified that as a protective measure, they believed that girls would not be safe if walking alone. However, even boys cannot be sent to study outside the village until they turn eight or nine years old (*Sheikh*-FGD, 08/2005/*Bara 2*).

Regarding education, the people have their own perceptions; they know that education is important for both men and women. One of the impacts of male-migration is the contact with other cultures, which have opened-up opportunities for girls to enrol in formal schools and acquire a higher education. In contrast, for some of those who still live in the villages, girls' education is not very important, especially if the family is poor. If the limited resources constrain the families from sending all the children to schools, girls always have to pay the price in this equation. In general, both boys and girls would be disadvantaged if their families are very poor and cannot afford to pay the accommodation and school costs outside the village. During a focus group discussion in *Bara 2* a village leader summarised the group's perception about the importance of education:

'We can now see how the lives of the people, who left the villages and went to live in Khartoum and nearby cities, have changed. They come to spend the holidays in the village; their children are educated, healthy and look different. The villages that have many educated and influential politicians, you can find everything, water, schools and clinics. We think education is the way to develop our village rather than depending on these projects/organisations' (VL-FGD, 08/2005/*Bara 2*).

It is clear that the participants had made the link between education and the level of people's capability to establish relationships, access resources and achieve development. Despite the

lack of government responsiveness and accountability, some villages in the area succeeded in developing. These villages have no influential government officials among their residents but have a long history with education. These villages have managed to survive and achieve some forms of internal development. Taking *Bara 3* can show us an example of the locals' participatory efforts and outcomes. *Bara 3* is situated in the project site but was not selected by the project for any interventions; it has been seen by the project as one of the better-off villages. There were 500 households and various associations including village popular committee, youth club, religious groups, women social associations, Red Crescent (RC) and the education committee. The women's associations organised many joint programmes, in particular, with the Red Crescent, education committee and Youth club. Some nutrition and First Aid training courses were implemented through joint efforts with the RC. They also organised an annual fundraising campaign to support the schools and group weddings, which became a tradition in many villages. The village (*Bara 3*) enjoyed many services; it has a large elementary school, which was established in 1953 and accommodates 643 children, both girls and boys, from the village and the surrounding villages. There are six mosques, a water pump, three flourmills and many other small enterprises. Literacy is very high; almost all the villagers can read. Many people continued their secondary and university education elsewhere (SH-FGD, 10/2005). This resulted in having large numbers of highly educated and professional people who work in large cities or abroad mainly in Saudi Arabia and Gulf States. General appearances such as the existence of cars, trucks and the style of the buildings could reflect that there are some differences in comparison to other villages. Participants from the project's participating villages related these differences to the impact of education and contributions of educated people. The focus group participants (28/09/2005/ FGDBara 3) confirmed the absence of government authorities and expressed their doubts of any outstanding achievements that could be made by development or relief organisations. They indicated that what had been achieved in their village was initiated and implemented by grassroots organisations. Nevertheless, people believed that communities could not do everything alone, but transparent and efficient government authorities could make a great difference.

Development of transport and communications systems was another community priority. In fact a well developed infrastructure and transportation system can save people's lives, especially in these marginal areas, which are threatened by drought and famine. Lack of transportation as well as its cost affect traders' ability to respond to a crisis and transport food

or fodder from other areas. This means that even if people have the ability to purchase food or fodder for their animals they might not get it and that contribute to the creation of famines. The villagers in *Bara 2* recorded their experiences with dry seasons, which might threaten them at any time:

‘All animals starved to death during May and June (2005). Some people lost their animals because fodder was very limited. Many people had the money to buy it, but from where? We know it was found somewhere else. It should be transported from other places. There was no government to help us, we do not know them and they do not know us. They only serve the capital where they live. You did not hear our girls singing: we wish to go to Khartoum; from where the airplanes fly, where the president sleeps, and where everything is in heaps’ (RP-FGD, 08/2005/ *Bara 2*).

Local people have great knowledge of their problems and needs. In *Bara 2* the participants used the problem tree technique to identify their problems and the causes and solutions. Apart from the drinking water, poor education and health services, which are common problems in almost all North Kordofan villages, the participants identified the decline of agricultural productivity as one of the main problems in the area. They related it to decline of soil fertility, lack of agricultural extension services, spread of agricultural pests and diseases, lack of improved seeds, lack of finance, and desertification. They were also able to identify consequences of poor agricultural productivity; decline of income, shortage of food and migration to other cities. They believed that if agricultural productivity improved many of their problems could be dealt with.

### **Poverty, Capability and Actions**

The poverty level in the project sites suggested that the rural poverty level is 70% (IFAD: 2005:3). The research participants, through PRA wealth ranking, used many indicators such as land, number and kind of livestock, style of building, number of rooms and commercial assets, to rank well-being. Each indicator was given a score. It has been noticed that neither the scores nor the indicators were similar in all villages. Despite the fact that there was no great variation between most of the villages but still there were some features such as building styles and existence of cars and trucks, which gave an indication that a few villages had different socio-economic conditions. This could explain why there were some variations in terms of indicators and scores. In one of the villages women’s clothes, jewels, cars and trucks were placed as indicators and those who ran the village’s shops and services, such as flour and oil mills, were classified as rich.

In *Um-Ruwaba 1* there were 160 families belonging to different tribes. Of these 6% were classified as wealthy, and 19% as middle class while 75% as poor and the break down of the figures is shown in Table 7.2. According to the participants' wealth ranking criteria, poor households are those who own less than a 5-hectare farm, but are not capable of cultivating it because they cannot afford to prepare the land and buy the agricultural inputs. They always need to work for other people during the rainy season to meet their urgent needs of food, clothes and medicine. Poor households also have one room and in most cases no fence. Most of the poor do not send all their children to school, because they cannot afford to pay the annual school fees and buy the school stationery. The poor cannot afford to pay for the medicine whether it is available in the village or not. The middle class households own 5-10 hectares and some of the farm's inputs. The members of the household cultivate their land, which means that they have surplus food and savings to survive the farming season without income. They usually own a house of two rooms and a veranda, send their children to elementary school and afford to pay for health services and medicine inside the village. Rich households own more than 50 hectares; some have more than 100 hectares and own all agricultural inputs. Rich households can afford to hire some people to work in their farms and rent others land to cultivate. They have big houses; each contains three rooms or more and is built from permanent material. They afford to pay for the education of their children until university and get health services and medicine from towns.

**Table 7.2: Criteria for Well-being Ranking in Um-Ruwaba 1**

Criteria	Assets owned / ability		
	Poor	Middle-class	Rich
Number of families	75%	19%	6%
Land (hectares)	<5	5-10	> 50
Livestock	0-5	5-10	> 50
Size of house (no. of rooms)	1	2-3	>3
Paying for medicine	Nil	Limited	High
Paying for education	Very limited	Limited	High

Source: PRA results, 09/2005.

In *Um-Ruwaba 2*, 73% of the population is classified as poor, 17% middle class while 10% were identified as wealthy and the break down of these figures is shown in Table 7.3. In this village, where the socio-economic status is slightly higher in comparison to other villages, people used more indicators to rank their categories. Besides land, animals, and size of the house, other assets such as small enterprises, trucks, family members who work overseas and women's jewellery and expensive dresses were used to rank household's wealth. Women in poor households did not have gold or expensive dresses. For middle class households women own 2-3 pieces of gold while in wealthy households women have a lot of gold and wear expensive dresses. In fact, the Sudanese women's traditional dress (*Tu'ob*) can cost up to US\$150. Women normally differentiate between different styles, materials and the producers.

**Table 7.3: Criteria for Well-being Ranking in Um-Ruwaba 2**

Criteria	Assets owned		
	Poor	Middle-class	Rich
Number of families	387	90	53
Land (hectares)	10	10-20	>20
Livestock	<10	10-20	>20 – hundreds
Size of house (no. of rooms)	2	3	>3
Women jewels	Nil	2-3 pieces	A lot
Job	Casual labours	Working abroad	Traders

Source: PRA results, 09/2005.

Social status or leadership were never mentioned as criteria or something important. This could be attributed to the fact that people's understanding of leadership and representation is different. It was perceived as obligations and responsibilities rather than privileges. It was observed that most of the committees' leaders are from the middle class category or teachers.

In general large numbers of families in the project area are unable to retain their surplus of labour. Some poor families, instead of investing in their own land, usually work for wealthy people to meet their immediate needs. The poor families, who manage to cultivate their land, normally sell their products immediately after the harvest and at lowest prices. Wealthy traders, from inside and outside the area, buy at very low prices and arrange for transportation to highly populated centers and/or store the products until the prices increase.

The poor have no cooperative associations to facilitate transportation, storage and marketing of their products, nor do they have any sources of alternative income to help them survive until the prices go up.

Lack of employment opportunities in villages has forced almost all young males to migrate outside the villages to the nearby cities and the national capital, particularly during the dry season (January-June). It has been acknowledged that those migrants provide great support to their families during this period, although apparently the incomes of these migrants were not counted. People viewed this income as very limited and adequate only to help the family survive until the new farming season. Almost all those migrants returned back during autumn, either to cultivate their land or work on the farms of the rich.

In North Kordofan people's responses and actions were directed by the need for survival and security. It appeared that their social system was constructed according to these needs. The following section examines this system and explains how the local communities managed to adopt survival participatory strategies without external assistance.

### **Developing Survival Strategies**

The indigenous participatory development approaches focused, for a long time, on addressing the key priorities, which were the provision of drinking water, building the schools and mosques, and helping each other to cultivate their land. The research participants recorded that there were different events that took place during the last hundred years, such as famines, which took place in 1906, 1945 and 1984. During the 1984/85 famines some people left their villages to live in the nearby cities or other regions and most of them returned after the crisis was over. Some villages managed to survive through cooperation and solidarity between the members of the community. The villagers in *Um-Ruwaba 3* (not covered by the project) were an example of community that developed a survival strategy when facing difficulty or crisis. The focus groups and PRA participants (conducted 15/10/2005, *Um-Ruwaba 3*) proudly explained their experiences during the 1984-famine crisis and 1998 fire disaster. During the 1984 famine the people decided not to move outside the village and form 'an emergency committee' that included the *Sheikh*, religious leaders and influential members of the community. This committee suggested that every household should declare what they had, grains, animals, foddors, money or gold. The committee decided to divide the village into three quarters and form sub committees, each one responsible for a quarter. The people in

each quarter cooked and ate together. The members of the communities who lived in the towns organised themselves and arranged for sending continuous support. This was to last for seven months until the crisis was over. The participants revealed that no one helped the village during the famine, neither the government nor the relief agencies. On the 1998 fire disasters, fire destroyed 65 houses in the village causing 40% of the families to lose their assets, such as grains, plants, animals and shops. During the fire disaster people worked together and donated whatever they had to rebuild 65 houses and provided food and clothes for the sufferers.

Two years ago the committees in *Um-Ruwaba 3* sponsored a group wedding. They organised *Nafir* for building the new houses and organised fund raising to cover all the wedding expenses, such as food, clothes, perfumes and furniture. The village Sheikh explained:

‘We managed to survive after each disaster. We know that ‘these organisations’ did not solve the problems. We saw them in other villages, and they did not change people’s lives. Therefore we did not ask them to help us. Our main problem is this government, which is supposed to be aware of our problems and help us’ (*Sheikh-FGD, 10/2005, Um- Ruwaba 3*).

## ***Political Framework***

### **Interaction with State Institutions**

Chapters Five and Six have examined some issues relating to decentralisation and government authorities. There are many negative practices and images of government authorities. There is a belief that the government determines who may have access to services and decision-making processes; therefore it can promote or constrain the movement and performance of grassroots organisations (GROs). In general, the poor relationship between the state and local communities may result in the exclusion of some from accessing resources and services. Despite this reality, the research participants showed that they preferred to establish a trusting, mutual relationship with the project management and local state institutions. They believe that if good relationships do not benefit them, confrontation will never do that, but would the government authorities respond equally to all grassroots organisations in the area? For example, the members of GROs, in *Um-Ruwaba 2* (FGD, 10/2005) spoke with pride about their ability to establish strong and friendly relationships with government officials, which resulted in the establishment of rural hospital, market, and



secondary schools. They spoke about developing personal relationships, organising invitations and showing support when dealing with local authorities and government personnel. During my stay in the village, I found that there were many influential government officials who belonged to this village and this could be explained how and why these GROs succeeded in establishing strong and beneficial relationships with government authorities.

Despite the widespread feature of solidarity and cooperation within the communities, whether homogenous or heterogeneous, there are still some leaders who make contact and coordinate with the government for their own benefit. A member of Popular Development Works (PDW) revealed that there was no possibility of coordinating with the IFAD project (NKRDP) or the locality authorities. It appeared that both parties had their own agenda for rejecting collaboration with national development NGOs.

'The government institutions refused to coordinate with our organisation because the government wants to establish relationships with local leaders and some influential individuals. For example we arranged to provide the poor farmers with improved seeds, either free of charge or at a lower price. This was dependent on available funds. In fact we are doing the government work, because the state government in NKS has subsidised the improved seeds by 87.5%. Unfortunately they sell them through the local leaders. Some of those leaders sell the seeds in the market. This year we bought the government's seeds from the market to distribute to the farmers' (MM-SSI, 09/2005/PDW).

Despite these negative practices there is a new change in the thinking of the key government officials, particularly the planners at North Kordofan State level. The following section illustrates this shift.

### **New Administrative Shift: Towards Real Decentralisation**

According to the recently changed government decentralisation policy (KD-SSI, El-Obeid, 07/2005) North Kordofan State comprises five localities, *Bara*, *Um-Ruwaba*, *Gabrat El-Sheikh*, *Shiekan* and *Sodri*. The five localities constitute nineteen administrative units. The new governance system, which was approved and applied in 2004, has started the establishment of localities to replace the old provincial system. The goal of establishing these localities was decentralisation of resources and initiation of a comprehensive development plan. The Ministry of Finance and Labour Force (MFLF) has been responsible for developing mechanisms to enhance the cooperative efforts and supports for the new system. 75% of

manpower in the state institutions was transferred to the localities and four major departments were established at the locality level to absorb the transferred staff. These departments are education and social services, engineering and health, finance, and agriculture. The new staff started to receive some technical training. The State Government and the MFLF has great expectations that after the peace process in Sudan and the exploitation and export of oil more resources would be allocated for development. The MFLF established the following coordination units: 1) the Development Council, which is aimed at coordinating the government efforts and organising a regular meeting to agree on allocating resources according to their needs and plans; 2) the Local Government Coordination Council, which leads the strategic planning at local level, setting guidelines and formulating strategies, assessing the capacities and performance of the localities and creating optimum relationships between localities, state and local NGOs; and 3) technical Unit to coordinate with grassroots organisations accessing the financial institutions and enhancing the capacity of its members. In 2005 the MFLF started to produce an annual working plan, which included the plans of the state government agencies, UN agencies, and international and national NGOs. Government professionals at the highest level have become aware that there is a need to change the traditional system. A key director at the MFLF explained that:

‘By developing this system we are trying to develop the concept of people’s participation and a bottom-up approach in reality. This new organisational system required a tremendous courage from all of us to give up power and authorities, which we held for decades. In general most of the senior government officials now are fully aware of the principles and practice of people’s participation. The new system has created redistribution of power, which might not be admired by many people, who need to adjust themselves to this situation. Fortunately the external auditor report has shown that the corruption in the State institutions has declined by 41% in this year 2004/05, which we relate to the new system where there is more accountability and transparency’ (KD-SSI, 07/2005/ *El-Obeid*).

Another example was recorded from the Forests National Corporation (FNC) experiences with the community forestry programme. As part of agro-forestry programme the FNC has adopted a participatory management system in North Kordofan State. It focused on planting *Acacia seyal* and *Acacis senegalensis*, both produce gum Arabic, which is considered as cash crop. This plantation scheme utilises both communal and private land and offers a promising source of cash, at low cost, for local people. These forest plantations provide the villagers with fodder, medicine and fuel wood, especially during the dry seasons. These changes indicated that bureaucratic institutions could change their policies and adopt a collaborative

system. This requires support from existing development organisations and projects, such as the NKRDP. However despite the NKRDP claim about building institutional capacity at different levels, there was no evidence to show the project's involvement in these efforts.

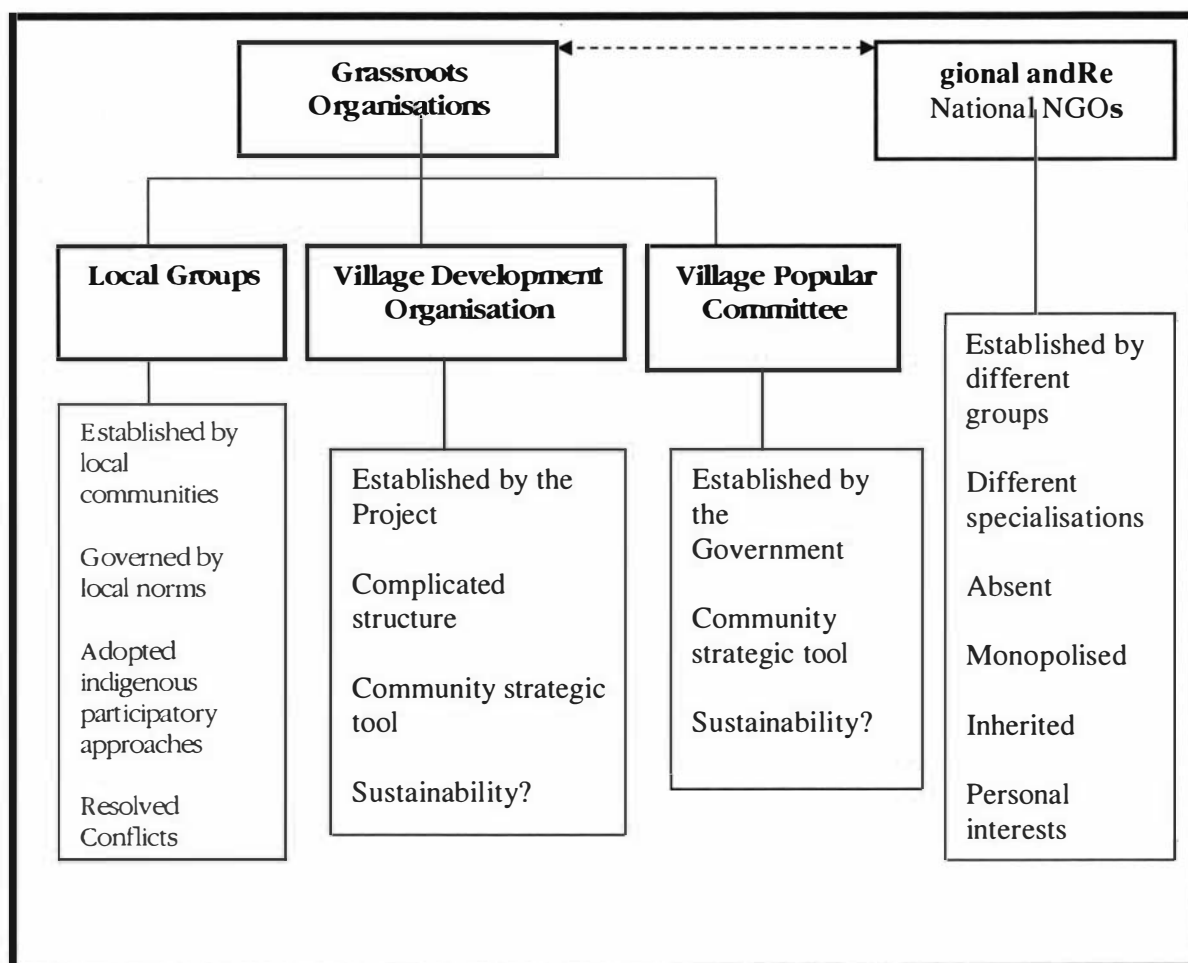
### **National and Regional NGOs**

In North Kordofan State there are large numbers of local non-governmental organisations (NGOs). Most of them are not active or trusted, but very keen to renew their registration and show up at public or formal meetings (SPO-SI, 10/2005). These regional NGOs have a similar reputation to that of the national NGOs, which is explained in Chapter Five. According to the Senior Social Development Officer at the Ministry of Education and Social Affairs (NKS) there are 265 registered organisations, eight of them are international, being UNDP, WFP, UNICEF, Plan Sudan, CARE, Islamic Relief, Red Crescent and IFAD (SSDO-SSI, 10/2005). Most of the regional NGOs were established in response to emergencies that occurred in the area, especially during the 1980s. Except for the Popular Development Works (PDW) all the national and regional organisations, which are assumed to be working in North Kordofan State, are completely absent from the two localities (*Bara* and *Um-Ruwaba*), where the NKRDP is working as can be seen in Fig 7.2. The regional NGOs justified their absence by not having enough resources and depending on volunteers who do not have enough time for community work (KM-SSI, 08/2005). However during the NGOs workshop in *El-Obeid* (the capital of NKS) in July 2005, which was funded by UNDP and attended by members of regional and some national NGOs, it was observed that the participants were talking about international partners and participation in international events. Meaning that these organisations have the capacity to develop connections and get access to resources.

As mentioned earlier Popular Development Works (PDW) is the only national organisation that works in the project site. PDW was established in 2000 by a small group of professionals who graduated from universities and gained experiences through working with development agencies in North Kordofan. The members of the organisation are seven people; six of them are volunteers, offering their holidays and some hours weekly to provide some services. One of them is the coordinator who is paid a living allowance from the projects' funds. The organisation has a small, one room, office in Khartoum and a portable computer. The group is aware of the social and religious organisations, practices and customary law. The group acquired knowledge of participatory techniques such as PRA methods, drama and puppet

theatre, through their work with international NGOs. They succeeded in gaining some support for small projects that targeted some villages in *Um-Ruwaba* locality in North Kordofan State. Almost all the funds are directed to field projects. The organisation office in Khartoum acts as a coordination unit. It focuses on planning, making contact with donors, government institutions and migrants, who live permanently or temporary in Khartoum.

**Figure 7. 2: Non-Governmental Organisations: the Case of North Kordofan State**



Source: Fieldwork Information, 2005.

Popular Development Works (PDW) is the only national NGO, out of hundreds at both national and regional levels who succeeded in establishing links with grassroots organisations in *Um-Ruwaba* locality. It involved people in planning and implementing field activities in

many villages. Its main objective is to address the issues of underdevelopment. It developed its own approach, which was based on personal contact and building on the existing local organisations and practices. They focused on building the capacity of grassroots organisations and encouraged the communities in each village to establish a centre (*Dar*) where people could meet, conduct training and awareness programmes, and accommodate village's visitors.

In *Um-Ruwaba* locality the Popular Development Works (PDW) organised sessions for collective identification and analysis of the problems and shared their experiences and knowledge with the communities. Based on communities' priorities and interests the PDW prepared projects' proposals and sent them to donors. The final formulation of projects' proposals and making contact with donors and government were done by this NGO; the people's role was mainly to present ideas and implementation. The villagers had shown little interest in participating in writing the project proposals or traveling around to seek technical and financial support. They acknowledged that they did not have time, resources and capacity for that. They also expressed their trust and full acceptance of what the PDW members are doing. A villager in *Um-Ruwaba 1* explained:

'The members of PDW belong to this community and they know what we need. We do not have time to do what they are doing; actually we do not know how to do it' (MV-FGD, 09/2005/ *Um-Ruwaba 1*).

For the Popular Development Works (PDW) there were no fixed interventions; different activities were implemented in different villages. The PDW organised separate meetings for men and women before calling people for joint meetings. A female member explained the organisation's approach:

'In each village and based on the existing groups, such as *Sanduq*, coffee group and education committee. We motivated the existing groups/committees to look at other issues and participate in relevant activities. We coordinate with the existing committees according to their interest and the proposed interventions. We also encourage the coordination between women and men rather than forcing them to form mixed committees' (FM-SSI, 09/2005/PDW).

The women's coffee groups were encouraged by the PDW to act as women's committees. Since they had to interact with men's organisations, they decided to select an old woman who

is respected by all of the community to speak out on behalf of the group. Normally that kind of woman in rural communities is called *Al-Hakama'a*, which means 'the ruler'. The name is usually given to a woman who speaks with wisdom and offers consultation for both men and women. In the villages where the PDW was involved, the women's committees had selected *Al-Hakama'a* as a chairwoman in addition to another assistant who was young, active and educated. The PDW used the women's coffee groups as a channel to reach women and involved them in the production of extension material such as drama and songs that promote the concepts of sharing and cooperation. They developed new ways of communicating new messages through drama, songs and social entertainments. Women's groups were the producers and presenters of educational material. The products of these groups have become well known all over the locality and adults memorised their poems. The PDW utilised these groups to discuss economic, social and political issues and to facilitate participation in developing activities. For them participation is considered as one package, as a means and as an end in itself. A member of PDW explained:

'We combined the coffee session, *Nafir* and drama. People in these areas are very talented. The women's coffee groups become singing groups; they turn the PDW concepts and ideas into poem. During public meetings, awareness and training programmes different groups present their songs' (MM-SSI, 09/2005/PDW).

As was explained earlier the Popular Development Works (PDW) is the only national NGO based in Khartoum that works directly with grassroots organisations in *Um-Ruwaba* locality. It helped these grassroots organisations to overcome their isolation and tried to link them with international and national development agencies. The PDW's contributions gained acceptance and appreciation as it succeeded in communicating with communities and donors, sharing common views and concerns and working as a caring and supportive voluntary team. Unfortunately the PDW has limited resources and received only small funds from international donors. However, the experience of the PDW in North Kordofan created new understanding of the role of local organisations and raised concerns about the strategies of international agencies and their staff's behaviour. The interaction between PDW and the NKRDP will be examined in the next chapter while we analyse the project approaches and mechanisms.

## **Indigenous Participatory Concepts in the Project Sites**

The villages in the project sites are small settlements of 50-550 households, the biggest ones are dominated by many tribes such as *Gawamaa*, *Baza'a* and *Hamar*; while the smallest villages normally belong to one tribe. In general there are no ethnic conflicts or domination of any kind by any group. The extended family is the basic unit of the social organisation, and kinship relations are the backbone within the social system. People of different tribal backgrounds live together; they mix through marriage and social interactions. The history of most villages dates back to the 18<sup>th</sup> century. People have memorised events since the beginning of the 20th century. The societies adhere to some social norms and values and people act spontaneously to achieve community work, welcome visitors and share each other's joys and calamities. It was observed that the villages almost share a similar way of life, social organisations and language. The size of the houses and the style of construction are similar with variation hardly evident between wealth and poverty, particularly for outsiders, unless explained by villagers themselves. Providing the family with income and food is the responsibility of the adults and is achieved in different ways and by different means. There is belief that a lot of work has to be done and no one can do it alone.

The structure of the community, especially at village level adheres to the spirit of solidarity, which is based on cooperation and sharing among the groups as family members, relatives and neighbors. Even if a person is alone, has no children, extended family or is a stranger, there is always someone who is ready and willing to help. When people are confronted by difficulties or challenges they act and contribute in different ways, individually or collectively, within the limits of their possibilities

Those who have migrated to cities and abroad are never cut off from the social and cultural setting in their rural homelands. They regularly visit their villages. They have obligations toward their families; in some cases these obligations can extend to include relatives, neighbors and friends.

### ***Motivating Values***

The word 'values' here refers to morals and is used by many research participants to describe some individuals' qualities such as leaders, wise members of the community or teachers. The values could be religious teachings or good traditions. People's language is full of proverbs

and poem phrases that praised the meanings and values of participation. The proverbs are part of this culture, often recited by adults as evidence of the legitimacy of certain actions or expressions of commonly held values. It encourages sharing and cooperation. People always use and repeat many proverbs that praise cooperation and solidarity such as *'one hand cannot clip'* which refers to the need of all people to work and do things together. The more common proverbs were *'God with the group'*, this referred to the importance of helping each other and working together, *'those who were not useful for their people would not be useful for others'*, and *'the scholars shared El-Nabaga'*. *El-Nabaga* is a Sisyphus tree's fruit; it is a very small fruit that cannot be divided into two pieces. Choosing *El-Nabaga* to be divided between two or more people was an emphasis on the importance of sharing and giving. In the Sudanese spoken language, the term 'scholars' was used to identify religious teachers or advisors; using this term gives the proverb more power as the scholars are normally seen as inspiring people. It was observed that people always refer to some religious values during meetings and conversations. A concept, such as *'the community is like one body; if any part of it is suffering, the rest of the body will feel the same pain'*, was repeated many times during the discussion and interviews. It appears that participation is seen as 'a value and a way of life'. These values bring people together when they have to support each other or carry out community work.

### ***Working for a Common Good***

Local communities have their own traditions and practices when they have to work together on initiatives or for a common good. These traditions are constructed around caring, sharing and obligations. Research participants identified some events and activities that brought the whole community together such as through establishment of schools, water pumps, mosques, houses and farming operations. People also participate in various activities to help individuals who serve the community. They donate or allocate land and organise *Nafir* to farm in order to support the teachers or the midwife.

At the village level there were many activities such as farming, funeral services, preparation for weddings, welcoming a newborn baby and caring for the sick and elderly, which required people to cooperate and help each other. During the rainy season, people also co-operate to achieve many farming chores such as planting, weeding and harvesting. Labour supply, whether for farm or community activities, was viewed as a real problem. Some families



move outside the villages and stay in their farms in temporary huts. They return back if something happens in the village or for Friday's prayer. The majority leaves their homes in the morning and come back before sunset. Not many people could afford hiring labour or had enough household members to achieve labour-demanding tasks. In order to overcome these difficulties people practiced for a long time different participatory models such as *Nafir*, (mobilization). This participatory practice forms a framework that is designed to reciprocate help and alleviate hazards, risks and hardships facing individuals or the community as a whole (Mohammed, 2001). *Nafir* urges those who finish their work, whether it is farming, construction or any other activities to help those who are sick or poor. The concept was extended to motivate people to carry out all community affairs and hence implement many collective projects. *Nafir* is commonly practiced during the rainy season. During this time there is a lot of work to be done within a short period of time (July-November). Those who have few household members usually invite the community to help them to complete their work. Some community members whose services are required all the time or at short notice, such as traders who have shops in the village, flour mill operators, midwives and health services providers are exempted from such communal work obligations. A midwife in *Bara 2* explained:

'I used to participate in *Nafir*. I also used to travel outside our village, attending wedding or funeral and spent days away, but since I was trained as a midwife, no matter where I travel, I have to come back to my village in the same day. Moreover, I do not have to participate in the *Nafir*' (MW-SSI, 08/2005/ *Bara2*).

The practice of *Nafir* was socially constructed with relation to gender and other values. I observed that people very much adhere to old practices. During a mixed focus group discussion an influential village leader in *Um-Ruwaba 1* explained his personal views on the practice of *Nafir* and the gender mainstreaming, which was employed by the project.

'Despite being a member in the 'IFAD's committee' I only invited the men to participate in the *Nafir*. 'You should go and help women but you can not ask them to help you'. Yesterday, thirty-four men turned up and volunteered for three hours on my farm. Last week our neighbor, a female farmer, invited women only for *Nafir*. However, some people ask families, both men and women, to come but they always do it as a 'family'. To accept the project idea of having both men and women in the same committee does not mean that people have to change their entire life and old ways of doing things, especially if that was better and it does not hurt anyone' (IFL-FGD, 09/2005/*Um-Ruwaba 1*).

In case of community activities, those who do not participate will be sanctioned and they will have to pay a fine that is determined by an association. For family and individual affairs the situation is different and even tougher for anyone to tolerate, it is neglect and exclusion. There is no discrimination here between leaders and ordinary people, rich or poor. However those who are powerful have more responsibilities. Therefore these sanctions will continue to be a threat for anyone who does not fulfill his or her obligations, no matter who they are.

'If people invite you to come for *Nafir* and help them on their farm or building a house, and for no reason, you did not go, next time you will not be able to invite someone to come and help you' (MF-SSI, 10/2005/*Um-Ruwaba 4*).

When talking about corruption and bad behaviors the participants always refer to men. The communities believe that women do not do bad deeds. In general for the sake of their tribe and family reputation, people usually avoid wrongdoing.

'Our society does not accept dishonest and corrupt people. If someone does something unacceptable he has to leave the village. His family always feels shame at his conduct' (ST-FGD, 10/2005/ *Um-Ruwaba 3*).

It has become apparent the discussion above that in North Kordofan the process of people's participation in community affairs is guided by local norms but also by voluntary grassroots organisations. The following section examines the representation process.

## **Representation: Concepts and Organisations**

Participation in community affairs is always organised and managed by local associations. People who have completed secondary school or worked as teachers have more social status and are always selected to represent the community or take part in grassroots organisations and conduct tasks that require recording and reporting. These organisations are usually formed through consultations and negotiations, a process that takes time before members of the organisation are selected. This process protects the community from tensions and conflicts. The grassroots organisations discuss community development issues whether they are about school construction or maintenance, provisions of equipment or any other activities related to drinking water, as well as organising social events. The organisations usually decide and inform people how this-or-that activity would be implemented. People participate according to their abilities. In case of marriages, people organise *Nafir* to build the new homes and share in the expenses. The household acts as a basis for participation in

community affairs. A member of the Village Popular Committee in *Bara 1* explained how people carry out the community works:

‘Participation in development activities is more or less a household obligation; at least someone must represent the household by attending the meetings. They also make contributions in the form of labour or input. When we have to do maintenance at the schools, we meet and decide what we will do, and how much it cost. So we ask every family to make a contribution. Some people pay more and some pay less. If what we get is not enough, we ask those who are well off to pay the rest of the cost’ (MVPC-FGD, 08/2005/ *Bara 1*).

The local communities through the village-contributory system overcame some difficulties that were created by the project strategy. Some rich and wealthy people give donations to ensure the involvement of poor families in the assemblies and the project committees, a condition that will be examined in the next chapter. However, the meaning could be far beyond the understanding of external planners. The locals view the protection of the internal social fabric as more important than gaining or losing materials. For them the values of cohesiveness and oneness should not be distorted.

During the last decades the communities organised themselves in groups. They worked collectively to cope with and adapt to shocks that took place as a result of drought, fire, diseases and pests. As discussed in Chapter Three, in participatory development grassroots organisations such as committees and groups were seen to be very important. In this regard the concept of leadership is crucial.

The socio-cultural network of North Kordofan communities was functioning properly and gaining its publicity and acceptance from internal norms. Leaders could emerge from ordinary and simple people. Having wise, efficient, generous and trustful leaders (whether they are rich, powerful or not) was one of these norms and a prerequisite for the stability and security of the community. A famous saying memorised by everyone and used by many research participants is; ‘those who have no *kabeer* should find a *kabeer*’ (*kabeer* refers to a leader, elder) and explicitly refers to a wise, humble and respectable person.

Leadership skills require qualities such as sacrifice, knowledge and communication. Apparently some families inherited leadership positions and family members are prepared for it. The research participants believed that members of grassroots organisations would not be selected unless they had something to offer such as wisdom, sincerity, power, wealth,

courage, knowledge, outside relations or the ability to negotiate. Leaders need to demonstrate that they have qualities and abilities for which they deserve to have and keep their positions.

In regards to grassroots organisations there are many associations and committees such as *El-Goodeya* Council and the Native Administration, which were established to provide social and legal service, and maintain peaceful living. The next section discusses how local grassroots organisations can play a crucial role in serving communities, speaking up on their behalf and protecting their rights.

### ***Grassroots Organisations***

In the project sites there are many grassroots organisations, which were established before the project to perform many social and religious functions (outlined already in Fig 7.2). The traditional leaders in most villages remain guardians and motivators and do not lead the grassroots committees. People select the members of grassroots organisations, and members choose one of themselves as a leader while the rest form the executive committee.

Locally these organisations were given different names, such as committees, associations or councils. It includes native administration, *El-Goodeya* council, village popular committee, migrants' organisations and women's groups.

### **Native Administration and Customary Law**

The Native Administration is the customary hierarchical institution of *Sheikhs*, *Umdas* and *Nazirs* which predates the modern state and is responsible for maintaining customary law, including allocation and management of land and natural resources, such as forests and rangeland. The Native Administration (NAD) was dissolved by the May regime in 1969. In 1996 the present Government made efforts to revive the NAD to perform its' traditional functions. The NAD and the modern local government system have had to develop formal and informal links and systems of co-ordination. Formally the NAD is accountable to local government authorities at the locality level and deals with community issues and sets policies and regulations for managing rural resources. For example once the harvest is completed, the customary laws state that agricultural land is subject to public grazing rights. From mid-July to mid-January animals are not allowed to enter the cultivated fields until the completion of harvest. The village *Sheikh* sets the start of this period with *Rafaa el-asa* (stick rising) which

is a symbolic action referring to punishment for those who break the law. At the same time there are some resources particularly land, which are also set aside to help those who have limited or no assets to start and stabilise their livelihood.

Despite the government legal laws, the Native Administration and customary law play an important role in gaining access to land and communal resources. Local communities resolve conflicts through *El-Goodeya* system and local court, while the customary law is based on social norms that encourage forgiveness and acceptance.

### **El-Goodeya: Indigenous Conflict Resolution System**

*El-Goodeya* means 'mediation-acceptance and generosity'. The concept is based on Islamic teachings that emphasised forgiveness and reconciliation. *El-Goodeya* is a unique Sudanese traditional approach that was adopted by local communities in rural areas to resolve conflict. The mediators could be the village's *Sheikh*, a religious or a community leader. The mediators should always be the most respectable members of the community. According to local social norms, conflicting parties had to respect the mediators' decisions, even if it was not the best solution (Egeimi, 2001:19-21). People refer to the mediator as 'the one who has a needle that he uses to cure a wound'. The mediation takes place in the *Sheikh's* or the religious leader's house. The mediators are responsible for implementing *El-Goodeya* procedure and ensure that its rules are respected and applied by all parties.

Conflicts around land, natural resources and social matters are usually presented in front of *El-Goodeya* council that is responsible for assessing the whole situation and making suggestions, which are normally accepted by different parties. For example if there is any damage to resources, particularly forests and agricultural land, the council will estimate the damage and determine the appropriate fine (compensation). If *El-Goodeya's* suggestions are not accepted the case will be transferred to a higher level, which is the local court governed by *Umda*. In fact the Native Court (under the traditional system, led by *Umda* at the locality level) does not look at any case if it was not presented through the *Sheikh* and forwarded by *El-Goodeya* council. If the complainer does not accept the Native Court's judgment the case will be transferred to the formal court.

Mediation normally starts with formal introductory statements that praise the concept of resolving such problems peacefully if they want to please God. Then a chance will be given to different parties to present their case and the mediators lead them to agree on resolving proposals. People come for mediation and have trust and great respect for the mediators. In most cases the people end up forgiving each other and resolving their conflict. The mediation meeting usually closes by reciting verses from the *Quran* the Muslim holy book. The *Sheikh of Um-Ruwaba 2* (FGD, 09/2005) commented that 'those who refuse *El-Goodeya* are always losers, because God loves those who accept *El-Goodeya*'. It is also a social value to accept *El-Goodeya* instead of going to the court. A member of Village Popular Committee in *Bara 1* reflected his view:

'The mediator should be fair otherwise this system will collapse. No one will respect the native administration if the leaders are siding with someone against the other and/or if they have personal benefit' (MVPC-FGD, 08/2005/ *Bara 1*).

The members of the NAD and *El-Goodeya* council are seen as inspiring leaders who care about all the community members and adopt an acceptable system that functions for a long time. The research participants believed that the leaders should not be involved in the project committees, because it belonged to the project and represented some people, but not all of the community. This understanding explicitly forecasted the future of these committees, which are usually referred to by local communities as 'the project's committee or IFAD's committee' and not a village development organisation as written in the project's documents.

### **The Village Popular Committees (VPCs)**

The VPCs were initiated and supported by the government since 1989. It was aimed that they would replace the political parties and act as political alliance for the government. It was also expected to provide some social services and establish contact with government authorities. An academic at IRDS explained how people responded when the government enforced this organisation.

'The villages' leaders in NKS are the supporters of the opposition party. When the government formed these VPCs those leaders either accepted the new organisation or became members. When the president or government's politicians visit their areas they convince the people to come out and welcome them because they believe this is the only way to get the government's support' (MAI-SSI, 07/2005/ IRDS).

North Kordofan populations are traditionally supporters of a traditional political party, which is opposing to the present government. Nevertheless, this did not stop them from forming the village popular committees (VPCs). People had formed the VPCs because they believed that this would be the only way to communicate with the government. The villages' leaders formed the VPCs in order to access the government's resources and gain some benefits for their communities. Practically it appears that these committees, if not supported by the political ruling party, will not be very useful for the community or contribute to any form of development.

At village level most of the grassroots organisations are called committees, such as education committee, mosque committee and village popular committee. Those committees are dominated and controlled by men. Formally the constitution of Village Popular Committees insists on having two female members out of six-committee members. A member of VPC in *Bara 1* explained:

'We have two women in the committee but they never attend the meetings. We put their names forward because this is the law. We did not use to have common meeting for men and women to discuss community affairs. However, we informed the two women and we told them they could attend and tell us what they think, but they never came' (MVPC-FGD, 08 /2005/ *Bara 1*).

By interviewing the same committee female members they explained that in this area there is a belief that some issues, particularly those issues that are related to government, politics or even school and mosques affairs, are men's business.

'We cannot go and sit with men and talk about government or school's maintenance. It does not look good, because these things are men's jobs. Women have their own issues and men too. Men do not interfere and join our groups such as coffee's group, *Sandug* or *Nafir* organised by women' (FVPC-SSI, 08 /2005/ *Bara 1*).

Gender differentiation is not concerned about the exclusion of women or men. It is about concepts and understandings, especially when there are different social organisations, practices and customary law. For example women can never be exposed to danger or humiliation if they make a mistake, men have to pay for that and stand in front of the local court. More details about 'gender concepts' will be examined in the next chapter.

### **Migrants' Organisations: Social commitment**

Social and economic conditions have forced many rural families to move to more prosperous states, especially the capital. Employment opportunities and availability of education and health services attracted young men to migrate to large cities. Those who migrated to other cities never abandoned their social and cultural life in their rural homelands. These migrants normally leave their families in their villages. Even those who have decided to move as a family usually pay regular visits to the villages. The sense of common identity is shared between the migrants who either left with their close families to live permanently in the towns, or those who move out during the dry season searching for jobs.

'Every year, we have to leave the village to Khartoum or Port Sudan; where there are many opportunities. We work as casual labourers or buying and selling products. We live in groups and support each other. We send money back to our families in the village. Women look after the kids and manage every thing. Living in Khartoum is very expensive and hard. We always pray for good rainy season so we can come back to our village and stay here' (YMP-SSI, 09/2005/*Um-Ruwaba 1*).

The migrants maintain continuous and strong economic and social relationships with their families, relatives and friends in the villages. They send money to help in building and maintaining community buildings, such as mosques, schools and centres. They also help those families who struggle to survive. These migrants usually maintain the social ties and relationships among themselves. They formed small groups inside the three-capital cities (Khartoum, Khartoum North and Um-Durman). These groups provide accommodation and support for new movers. They look after each other's affairs in case of sickness and calamities at home. They support individuals while they are searching for jobs. They also contribute to resolving conflict between members of the groups or with external communities. The groups are always known by the name of their village.

### **Women's Groups**

Gender division of labour is very much of evident within these communities. All women in the villages are full-time homemakers. In each village there are some girls who go to school in the cities and some women who graduated from universities and work as teachers or government employees in the large cities. Women's groups exist in the villages and are concerned about different issues such as saving, group wedding and fund raising for the school and mosques. For example the '*Sanduq*' is traditionally a well known rural institution for interest free saving. This kind of saving is created and managed by women all over the



Sudanese villages. There is no literature about the history and impact of this practice. Through the *Sandug*, women form a group and choose one of them as a leader called a treasurer or the head of the *Sandug*, who makes proposals of how much everyone should be paid per week or fortnight or every month for those employed in formal sector. The leader ensures the *Sandug* maintains and achieves its goals. She also collects the money and gives it to one person at the time of collection. The members agree among themselves on who would be the first and who would be the last. Always there is consideration for each other's circumstances. If there were an emergency the planned queue would be adjusted. The participants in the *Sandug* (*Um-Ruwaba 3*) identified the reasons for joining: firstly, to help themselves or their family; secondly, they like to be in a group and make a contribution to the community. In fact the group participants trust each other and enjoy the friendly relationship. This relationship always encourages the group to think about other activities rather than just collecting and saving money. The money could be used in a combined project or adopting a similar project. In some cases the group makes a donation for supporting a community project. A *Sandug* treasurer in *Um-Ruwaba 1* explained:

'We as a group decided to put a small amount of money aside. After each collection I kept a certain amount of money. At the end of the *Sandug* we decided to use that money for buying special kitchen items, which we use for cooking when we have big gatherings, such as weddings, funerals and public events. In the past we used to borrow from all of the households. One item from here and one from there, but now we have everything in one place' (ST-SSI, 09/2005/ *Um-Ruwaba 1*).

The ideology behind the *Sandug* is to have access to a lump sum of money that can be used for something useful. This practice had formed a basis for applying a microfinance system that was introduced by development projects and locally was given the same name.

## **Summary and Conclusion**

The North Kordofan Rural Development Project is implemented by IFAD and the Government of Sudan. Its main objective is to improve the living conditions of targeted communities. Its staff are all nationals who are completely aware of the local Sudanese culture, which is shaped by dominance of social relations and personal interaction. Maintaining internal relationships and contacts between them and with communities is a crucial factor in facilitating the whole development process.

In regards to local communities, the research participants were able to identify their problems, needs and priorities. They also identified various measures that had been undertaken by them to overcome crisis and difficulties. There was significant agreement between participants about the key issues that influenced people's livelihoods. The following are most critical: an absence of local opportunities for young men; poor access to public services such as education, health, water and transportation; and lack of effective partnership arrangements between local communities, government authorities and development organisations. This might influence people's interactions with development providers as well as the outcomes of participatory development process.

This chapter highlighted that there are new forms of participation in decision-making institutions at the State and Locality levels in North Kordofan State. The existence of key development professionals who have strong beliefs in participation, among the bureaucratic institutions such as Ministry of Finance and Labour Force and Forests National Corporation, has resulted in production of creative participatory development policies. This proves that new values among development professionals can create new strategies and structures. These initiatives require support and commitments from all the development actors; the government authorities, international development agencies and local NGOs.

This chapter has paid attention to the dynamics of indigenous participatory values and practices and has shown that local communities adhere to these norms. It has become clear that those communities' internal values make a significant contribution to development in their villages. The indigenous participatory practices reflect the cultural values that provide meanings and a sense of identity for local communities in North Kordofan. It becomes clear that the lives of the people of North Kordofan, whether living in the villages or migrating to other towns inside the country or abroad, are constructed around participative relationships of solidarity and cooperation. Moreover, leadership is very important. People perceive leadership skills and wealth as being provided by God, who would not give any person or a group any privileged status. Representing people is also seen as an obligation and responsibility. It requires time, resources, skills and knowledge to address communities' concerns and to face decision-making authorities.

## **Chapter Eight: North Kordofan Rural Development Project: Approaches, Mechanisms and Outcomes**

### **Introduction**

The previous chapter introduced the North Kordofan Rural Development Project and provided information on its staffing and management system. It suggested that to implement a participatory development programme there is a need for open dialogue, tolerance, and free exchange of information among all development actors, particularly professionals. The previous chapter also offered a clear picture of the social setting in North Kordofan State. It demonstrated how people adhered to various co-operative and participative values, which conceptualised the formation of their grassroots organisations and constructed unique participatory practices

The focus of this chapter is on the nature and the potential of the project's participatory approaches and mechanisms. It reflects on how the local communities responded to the project's interventions. Understanding various development actors' visions and the strategies that they used to negotiate and/or interact with others could help to explain the insights that would contribute to knowledge and practice of participatory development. It would also pave the way for making suggestions to enhance the outcomes of people's participation and answer the major research question in this enquiry: how can the outcomes of participatory development projects in Sudan be enhanced?

This chapter starts with an introduction of the approaches that framed the project's strategy and shaped the participatory processes. The experience of establishing new village organisations along with the project's interventions and outcomes are explored in the next sections. This is followed by an outline of the factors that influenced people's participation. The final section provides a brief summary and concludes the chapter.

### **The Project's Approaches**

The North Kordofan Rural Development project employed the self-help and gender mainstreaming approaches. The project started by selecting the villages and using PRA methods to identify people's needs and priorities. The project literature emphasised the

importance of coordination with other development providers in order to employ these approaches and achieve the intended objectives. This section will examine the project's approaches and reflect on the related issues.

### ***Selection of the Villages: the Questionable Choices***

The selection of villages for the project was based on specific criteria focused on readiness and neediness that are outlined in Table 8.1. In practice the most critical criteria was village size. However, this led to exclusion of small villages of less than 50 households, which were found to be the neediest (IFAD, 2004). While the project reports emphasised the selection of the poor villages, surprisingly some well-off villages, which have the best services in the area, were selected. This indicated that some undeclared factors had influenced the selection process. I found out that some influential government officials were originally from these villages. These cases proved to the local communities that educated people could have influential status and direct the flow of resources and services. A former NKRDP officer commented about the project targeted communities:

‘You can see in *Um-Ruwaba 2* that they have many highly educated people and some influential leaders in the state government. They do not need the project's interventions. They have an elementary school, a secondary school, a rural hospital, electricity, central market, and various organisations, such as village graduates, youth group and active women's groups. The village has a large number of educated women who work in towns. They have a big community in Khartoum, who continuously support the village. They do not need the project's support but the project is there, why?’ (FPO-SSI, 07/2005/*El-Obeid*).

Most of the neediness criteria were not considered when the project's activities were implemented. Through the semi-structured and structured interviews the project staff have identified only two criteria, which were normally, used when a village was selected, size of the population and living standards. In practice all the villages of less than one hundred households were excluded even if their living standard was worse than others. Some criteria such as availability of resources and special funds for development have become a condition for excluding the poorest groups. There is a contradiction between the set criteria seen in Table 8.1 because those who are neediest basically have no resources to contribute or make available for developing the required services. However, it appeared that the project put aside neediness criteria because it did not fit well with the self-help approach.

After selecting a village, the project approached the communities through village leaders in order to get their acceptance and support. The project used the traditional media channels such as mosque microphone, personal contacts and grassroots organisations to disseminate information and news about its interventions. The schools in the villages were found to be an efficient channel through which the project reached almost everyone, delivered messages and gained teachers' support and participation. In all the villages teachers, male and female, were seen as one of the most influential groups in the community. During community campaigns they were always assigned specific tasks. To gain more knowledge about the village the project used PRA methods to gather information and communicate with community members.

**Table 8.1: Criterion for Selection of Targeted Villages**

Selection Criteria	
Neediness	Readiness
Low living standard	Size of the population
Lack of water, health and education Services	Availability of resources and special fund for development
Large number of female headed-household	Level of women's participation
High illiteracy rate	Ability to contribute
Lack of technical and organisational skills	Availability of organisations
Type of housing / General appearance	Cultural and sport activities

Source: Project Reports (IFAD, 2005).

### *Using PRA Methods*

The North Kordofan project used different Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) tools, such as wealth ranking, problem tree and history profile to identify people's needs and priorities. The project staff used PRA techniques to gather information about communities' views and experiences with some programmes. During these sessions it was observed that the villagers did know about their problems and why they made this or that decision. It was noted that they rejected some ideas, even if these ideas were presented and backed up by the project. It is clear that the freedom of speech and people's ability to voice their opinions is part of the social fabric in these societies. People usually organise meetings in an open space and there are no rules and regulations to prohibit any one from attending assemblies or expressing his / her views.

**Table 8.2: People’s Priorities in Comparison to Project Interventions Listed by PRA Participants**

<b>People’s priorities</b>	<b>Project response</b>
Access to drinking water and/or improve the quantity and quality of drinking water	Support studies on water issues.
Access to formal education and/or improve the quality of education services	Support and supervise adult education Programme.
Access to health services.	Training health services providers and Midwives.
Provision of electricity and construction of accessible roads.	No response
Access to veterinary and agricultural extension Services.	Training of Para vets, providing agricultural Extension services.
Development of grain storage facilities.	Access to formal and informal credit.
Introduction of intermediate technologies e.g. food processing, tanning.	No response

Source: Fieldwork Results 2005.

During a PRA session in *Bara 1* in July 2005 that was conducted by the project to analyse people’s experiences with the credit programme it was observed how the project staff interacted with the community. The facilitators sometimes tried to direct the participants to accept proposals, while in others they justified low community participation in a micro credit programme and directed the participants to approve their views. During the project meeting in *Bara 2* also in July 2005 a senior officer facilitated a PRA method to identify the reasons that women were prohibited from participating in the formal credit programme, which was offered by the Agricultural Bank of Sudan. The project officer used a diagram to list what constrained women’s participation. At the beginning of the meeting there was silence and people looked at each other. The officer tried to encourage them and in the end stated her own opinion of what might prohibit women from participating in this programme. The participants had rejected the officer’s suggestions and insisted on presenting their own

perceptions. It seemed that all the PRA facilitator's expectations were wrong and some participants found them offensive. A village leader suggested:

'If you can forget about that diagram, let me tell you something. We will not let our mothers and wives to go to the bank to be humiliated. The bank threatens the people and throws them in jail and we do not accept that for our women. If you insist, we will go to borrow on behalf of them. Between you and us (the community and the project), the money is their money, and they will be fully in charge of it, but the responsibility in front of the bank is ours (Joint community and project Meeting, (07/2005/ *Bara 2*/ Field note)

Women contributed very little to the discussion during joint PRA sessions particularly where there were few or no educated women. During these meetings between the project senior staff, ABS investment officers, members of VDO committees and villagers in *Bara 1* and *2* it was observed that women rarely talked, although the sessions focused on their participation in the project's credit programmes. Only a few old women, after they had been asked by the men to talk for themselves, voiced their opinions and made statements or corrected misconceptions. During these meetings women revealed that they had been consulted about various programmes, either through female members of VDOs or through their male relatives. Those who expressed their views explained that women were fully aware of all the matters that related to the project or the community, whether they were directly involved or not. They also supported men's views about the ABS loans.

The project used PRA methods to collect the baseline information about people's priorities, which were not taken into account when plans were designed. Instead some activities were implemented to address people's problems rather than offering critical solutions. For example access to drinking water was always a problem. The project offered to conduct studies about this issue rather than assist in improving the quantity and quality of drinking water. Another example was access to and improving formal education services, which was identified as a second priority, but the project contributed by supporting an adult literacy programme (Table 8.2). According to IFAD (2004:5) the information gathered through a health ranking technique was not used to address the needs of the poorest categories or enhance their effective participation in the project's activities. Research participants revealed that those who were identified as the poorest groups were not participating. However, giving people a chance to present and analyse their problems would create an impression that the development agency had participatory-oriented strategies, which are dependent on people's

own needs, priorities and preferences. Using PRA methods to identify the problems that were encountered during the implementation of various activities would also create an image about the project's approach. Outsiders might think that the project has truly employed a process approach that opens space for accommodating ongoing changes.

As explained earlier the project assistance and interventions were made available through the self-help and gender mainstreaming approaches. The following sections explore these approaches and demonstrate how local communities interacted with these issues.

### ***The Self-help Approach***

The project design was based on a self-help approach where communities had to contribute cash or in kind towards the cost of implementation of community sub-projects such as the building of clinics and schools, organising nutrition classes for women, and preparing and planting enclosures (IFAD, 2004:34). The package of self-help measures focused on achieving efficiency and creating self-reliant communities. The project's management believed that if the 'beneficiaries' contributed to the cost they might show more commitment and act in a more responsible and positive way (SPM-SSI, 07/2005). The project reports indicated that when people contributed to development costs the activities could be expanded.

The self-help approach emphasised community's contribution and gradual taking of responsibility of development in the villages. Through this approach the assistance was provided to those communities who agreed to the project's conditions. These conditions included forming a development organisation, establishing a community centre, adopting the gender mainstreaming approach and contributing to not less than 60% of any project cost (SPM-SSI, 07/2005). This form of assistance has followed a different path than that of aid agencies since 1984/5, which were free of charge. This created some conflicts between the project's new approach and communities' understanding of external assistance. The project's assets in form of buildings, office facilities and cars as well as the external missions who used to visit the villages had given the impression that the project had a lot of resources. The following accounts reflect how the development actors view this situation. A senior project manager explained:



'People in these areas believed that projects, especially those supported or implemented by international agencies, should pay them and provide everything. They used to refer to any activities or equipment as 'theirs' and not 'ours'. This was the greatest challenge to face the project. People at the beginning resisted, very much, the new participatory concepts (e.g. self-help). The project staff spent a lot of time raising people's awareness and encouraging them to participate. They always reminded us about other projects' (SMN-SSI, 07/2005).

A village leader in *Bara 2* asserted:

'The project had the resources; cars, staff and people of different colours who came to visit us, but they gave us 'talk'. They told us to help ourselves. How we can help ourselves if we have nothing. The people are very poor and they cannot build a school or hospital. What is the meaning of having a project if we have to do everything by ourselves? We know our problems and how it can be solved. We need resources and skilled people' (VL-FGD, 07/2005/ *Bara 2*).

Furthermore another participant added:

'We have experience with many organisations. They come and go. They did small things; training, distributing food, or building grain stores in the wrong places. Everything they did collapsed after they left. You travel around and you can see that people called things after their names: UN's store, Plan Sudan's clinic or CARE's well. They did not consult us. We know what is better for us and we know how to do it. However, IFAD' people are not better than them. They also do small things and ask for everything' (RP-FGD, 07/2005/ *Bara 2*).

Apparently people were poor, a condition that they possibly could not escape without help (Remenyi, 1991:1). However, these perceptions indicate that people had lost trust in development organisations or projects, which mean that what had been implemented or offered by these organisations did not contribute to their development. As explained in Chapter Seven, poverty in this area amounted to more than 70%, which indicated that the majority would not be able to contribute in cash. The project evaluation mission reported that the communities are enthusiastic about contributing in kind for the implementation of community projects but was unable to contribute in cash (IFAD, 2004:34). However this shift in delivering development assistance required new understanding and interaction between the project and the communities.

## ***Enforcing Gender Mainstreaming Approach***

Women in North Kordofan were fully involved in household decisions and participated in their own way in community affairs. Chapter Seven illustrated that in North Kordofan gender relationships at household level were based on respect and acknowledgement. Despite their absence from the most influential organizations, such as the native administration, *El-Goodeya* council and the education committee, women have their own social organisations.

Chapter Five has demonstrated that, during the last two decades, development projects in Sudan employed the Women in Development approach (WID). Due to ongoing debate and criticism of this approach IFAD decided to adopt the Gender and Development approach (GAD) in its current projects. This approach focused on both men's and women's roles and responsibilities within a complementary scope. The project focused on involving women within the community network and not in isolation. Therefore it insisted on establishing a mixed organisation and having at least two female members in its committee. It was observed that when the project staff talked about women they used the term 'gender' and implicitly referred to women. This explains why people in the project area used the word 'gender', the English term and not the equivalent Arabic word, when they spoke about women and women's participation, for them the word 'gender' means 'women'.

It has become clear that women were targeted by the project and placed in the centre of its development process. They were offered opportunities to have a say and present their ideas on community affairs, and participate in planning and managing some activities. The questions should have been asked; are women willing to hold on to those opportunities? How do men feel about that? Does the new open-space create any change in people's understanding and standard of living? If any what would be the possibility of its sustainability? Answering these questions could help in understanding women's perceptions and their interaction with external development providers. It could also help in identifying factors that might influence their participation in development projects.

According to a senior gender specialist (SGS-SSI, 07/2005) the first meeting between the North Kordofan project and the villagers in *Bara 1*, was attended by men only. The *Sheikh* of the village informed the project staff that men and women would not form a mixed

committee. The project management came out with a plan that included a comprehensive awareness programme. Female staff, particularly fieldworkers, were assigned to stay in the villages during these campaigns. After intensive awareness sessions in *Bara I* the *Sheikh* and other leaders invited women to attend a general assembly and select two members to join the Village Development Organisation. Later the two female committee members were given specific tasks; one as a secretary and the other one as credit accountant. The project staff believed that this plan had changed the locals' views about having women in the same committees. Some research participants revealed that people began to accept the idea when they saw respected and educated women traveling from towns, leaving their families or children, and coming to stay for days in the villages. As a result they started to accept the idea of having men and women in one committee.

Despite these efforts and outcomes it appears that this form of participation is not in the best interests of women, nor does it address their concerns. The perceptions below, illustrate how the two development actors the project staff and the 'beneficiaries' conceptualised this critical issue. The project gender specialists believed that women should not be seen as hidden resources but must be given a chance to present their perceptions and views on the things that concern them. A senior gender specialist described the project ideology and plans when dealing with women's involvement:

'We were very tough about having at least two women on each committee, because if we left that as optional, women would never get a chance in these new organisations. Therefore, when some villages refused these requirements we stopped our activities. After a while and when they found that we were very serious about this, they returned back and accepted the project conditions. Our main purpose was to encourage women to participate in all decisions that affect the community. In fact men have diverse knowledge and experiences, through the interactions in these committees. Women will learn from them and build their capacities' (SGS-SSI, 07/2005).

'The project wanted the women to be dependent on themselves through learning and taking loans from the banks. However, we knew that if we asked them to come for literacy classes they would not come; therefore, we introduced something they liked, such as nutrition and food processing. Therefore we mixed what we wanted to do with what they preferred' (FFW-SSI, 08/2005).

This understanding has shaped the project's plans and activities for creating changes within the communities. The staff intention to empower women and open space for them within the

society was undeniable. This intention was constructed around the project's vision rather than people's own visions. The following statement represented a common perception that was recorded during interviews and discussions:

'Having women in the same committee is not bad and not having them is also not a big deal. We can form our own groups and do better, and feel better about it. We are suffering like men who are forced to leave the village and travel away to provide money for their families. Improving the services and reducing the burden on us is most important than focusing on meetings and talking about gender' (FVDO-SSI, 08/2005/ *Bara 1*).

Women are not concerned or anxious about participation in the same committees with men. They are satisfied with their own groups and mainly focus on immediate problems of survival rather than these philosophical conceptions around gender issues. However, enforcing certain approaches has led some communities to respond in different ways. The villagers in *Um-Ruwaba 4* learned from others' experiences and decided not to waste time. They informed the project's technical unit that they had prepared the house, which would be a community center and selected two people from each grassroots organisation to form the Village Development Organisation (VDO's) committees. Women representatives were selected and a women's committee was formed. In *Um-Ruwaba 4* 160 people were registered as members of the VDO, 66% of them were women (MM-FGD, 10/2005). The VDO of *Um-Ruwaba 4* focused on asking for what could be provided by the project rather than what they actually needed. A member of the Village Development Organisation explained:

'The project is concerned about gender issues and obviously cannot do what people are asking for. They only do what they came to do. Therefore we encouraged women to attend the meetings, be part of the committee and attend the training courses. Why do we have to waste time talking about something they cannot do or accept? We need this revolving fund and the training' (MM-FGD, 10/2005/ *Um-Ruwaba 4*).

The project, while focusing on the inclusion of women, has ignored the interests of young men, who are forced to migrate to urban centres in order to sustain their families. In fact all of the young men who participated in this research had returned back from the cities to do the farming work during the rainy season. They revealed that what was offered by the project did not make any difference in their lives or encourage them to stay after the season. A young male participant in *Um-Ruwaba 1* explained:

'It is our dream to find ways through which we can gain income. If the work and opportunities in the towns are better than here, why do we come back during this season? What we get in the cities is just enough to sustain our families. This IFAD project offers small amounts of money, which cannot make a project and even if it did, all other supporting facilities do not exist, no electricity, no roads and no markets. Our needs are bigger than what they offer' (YMP-SSI, 10/2005/ *Um-Ruwaba 1*).

Implementing participatory development projects require establishing networks and relationships with related institutions and other development partners. The following section explores the project' roles in linking local communities with outsiders and how various partners interact with each other.

### ***Coordination and Establishing Networks***

Co-ordination and establishing links and networks are crucial elements for implementing effective participatory development interventions. Clearly, several partners need to be involved. Despite all of the arguments that call for partnership and establishing networks, the projects continued to follow the conventional development practices (Richards, 2004). Some government institutions such as an agricultural extension service and the Water Corporation were involved through some of their professionals who provided their services during a certain period of time as private consultants. In some cases, the project played the role of a contractor to ensure the flow of services to the communities. For example it coordinated and paid the cost to specialised state institutions such as Ministry of Health to provide training for villages' service providers. Research participants viewed the implementation of any activities through individual contracts or paying government agencies for providing services as a waste of resources and the creation of an unacceptable practice. A key director at the Ministry of Finance and Labour Force criticised this practice:

'The project established relationships with individuals through personal contacts. It hired individuals who are government employees to conduct the training programmes and consultancies. This does not seem to be right' (KD-SSI, 10/2005 *El-Obeid*).

Another agricultural extension specialist at the MAAI in *El-Obeid* explained:

'IFAD project does not coordinate with others. It works on its own. We heard that it hired private consultants to do the work or paid some departments to train the beneficiaries. By so doing, it initiated bad practices and tensions between government staff' (AEX-SSI, 10/2005/ MAAI).

The specialised government institutions were not involved as partners who had obligations and responsibilities. As a result local government institutions did not communicate and coordinate with Village Development Organisations (VDOs). Failure to facilitate the establishment of relations between public service providers and community organisations affected the outcomes of the project interventions and probably affected the sustainability of VDOs. Establishing relationships with individuals rather than specialised agencies had created new forms of practices that contradicted transparency and really not efficient. Moreover conducting coordination by the project had deprived local organisations of building networks and developing mutual relationships with formal services providers, private sector and, national and international NGOs.

Another example is the relationship between the project and the Arab Sudanese Seed Company. This company provides seeds of improved crop varieties and has their branch in the capital of North Kordofan State. The project facilitated the provision of improved seeds of some agricultural crops, such as sorghum, millet, groundnut and guar. This was aimed to improve the crop productivity. The members of village development organisations (VDOs), who participated in this research, had no idea about these improved seed providers. The project communicated with this company on behalf of the communities and arranged with VDOs to pay the improved seeds cost from the revolving fund.

The project relationship with NGOs could be examined through its interaction with Popular Development Works (PDW) the only national NGO in the project site. Chapter Seven examined the experiences of PDW in *Um-Ruwaba* locality. This section reflects on the interactions between the project and this national NGO and shows how development participants perceive the project accounts. In *Um-Ruwaba 4* the PDW established activities and built a community centre before the project. When the project selected *Um-Ruwaba 4*, the local community was asked by the project to build a new centre. In fact, these community centres are either donated by individuals or built by the community and the project provides

some furniture. The people in *Um-Ruwaba 4* informed the project staff there was no need to have another centre and the project could use the available one. The project management rejected the offer because they wanted to have their sign in front of a centre to show that the development agency exists in this area. A member of the VDO explained:

‘When IFAD came we told them we already had a community centre, which could be used for their activities. They said no. They told us to cooperate with IFAD, because it is a government project and had resources, while this organisation (PDW) had nothing. We have no other option, we needed assistance, like other villages, and we had to do what they wanted. Now we have two community centres in the village, one for IFAD and one for PDW’ (MVDO-FGD, 10/2005/ *Um-Ruwaba 4*).

A fieldworker in *Um-Ruwaba* locality explained how the field staff perceived the project management action:

‘We were shocked when a manager aggressively refused to cooperate with this NGO and prohibited the field team from making any contact or organising joint activities. We understood that he wanted to take credit for the achievements of the project instead of having partners who could share with us any appreciation or acknowledgement. But we all believed that this was a childish way of thinking. Unfortunately we could do nothing’ (FW-SSI, 10/2005/ *Um-Ruwaba*).

As explained earlier there was a conflict between the field staff and the senior staff. Clearly these contradicting views are related to the nature of planning and management as well as personal benefits and status. Apparently the project management and communities were guided by their own interests.

The development agency’s concern about gender issues and influence of power relations has resulted in establishing new community organisations. The formation of these organisations was intended to ensure the participation of women who were not taking part in the influential grassroots organisations (Native Administration, *El-Goodeya* council). A programme manager at the NKRDP explained that the decision of forming new organisations was aimed to create fresh and powerful organisations that could lead the development process (SPM-SSI, 07/2005). The following section introduces the village development organisations and explores people’s perceptions.

## Formation of New Organisations

For the NKRDP it was an opportune condition to start where there were no discriminative and exclusive grassroots organisations, political parties or other structures that might divide people. It has been illustrated in Chapter Six how the existence of these forms of organisations had negatively influenced the outcomes of the White Nile Agricultural Services Project, which was implemented between 1996-2001. Despite the significant diversity in socio economic environments between the two societies, North Kordofan and the White Nile, the NKRDP chose to establish new organisations aimed at replacing the old grassroots organisations with more efficient ones. In fact the project choice was influenced by its development agency's (IFAD) experience in the White Nile State (WNS). In contrast to the WNS, the community grassroots organisations in North Kordofan State were united and trusted by communities but had very limited capacity and resources. This requires a tremendous effort to generate shared-knowledge, transfer skills, and facilitate access to resources. At the same time the project has an opportunity to establish a participatory model, empower communities and make their indigenous grassroots organisations capable of achieving the project objectives and initiating their own development programmes.

Nevertheless, the project decided to create new structures, which were called the Village Development Organisations (VDOs). The VDOs were formulated at village level through general village assembly where, according to the size of the village, six to eleven members were elected to form the executive committee. According to the VDO's constitution, women should be 30% of the committees' members. Each committee consisted of chairperson, secretary, treasurer and treasurer assistant, nomads' representative, village *Sheikh* and extension workers. Some of the members who were given the extension workers' titles led the sub-committees, which dealt with agricultural, livestock, crop production and horticulture, women's development, agro-forestry and rangeland activities. The formation of the VDOs was carried out under the supervision of the project fieldworkers. The process of choosing the members and the president was democratic (SMN-SSI, 07/2005). However, as indicated in Chapter Seven local communities usually selected the members of grassroots organisations through consultations and negotiations, a procedure that protected the internal solidarity. It was evident that in some villages that this new 'democratic process' created tensions. In *Um-Ruwaba 4* the president of the village development organisation explained:



'We applied to the project and expressed our interest in participating but we made various arrangements that could maintain good relationships between people. First of all we decided to select the members for the 'project's committees' through consultation and when the assembly was held people knew who was supposed to be selected. We did not want to have the same sort of conflicts as other villages because of this voting procedure' (PVDO-FGD, 10/2005/ *Um-Ruwaba 4*).

The main objectives of the Village Development Organisations (VDOs) (IFAD, 2002a) were to:

- 1) Enhance the concept of solidarity, consultation and participation; motivate the community, local and national institutions to contribute to establishment of social service, protection of the environment and the development of natural resources;
- 2) Implement social and economic activities in order to improve the social and economic status of people at the village level;
- 3) Improve the productivity of crops and livestock;
- 4) Plan and implement capacity building programmes through self-help and gender mainstreaming approaches;
- 5) Establish partnership and seek support from the government and other development institutions; provide the members of the VDO with loans from the organisation's resources or through the facilitation of banks' loans; and
- 6) Co-ordinate the sustainable development efforts provided by different development agencies.

The VDO and its committees are responsible to the general assembly. According to the VDOs' constitution the village general assembly, which is formed of the registered members, elects the board of directors and the head of the committees, and approves the annual plan, budget and report. The responsibility of the board of directors is to resolve conflicts, maintain solidarity, invite and welcome official authorities, participate in preparing the annual plan and budget, and invite the village assembly for general meetings.

The establishment of a new organisation and its committees is a crucial mechanism for the project. The project moved even further when it prepared a constitution and was able to issue a registration act from the North Kordofan Government. In this regard it was assumed that this organisation would have formal power when dealing and communicating with local government institutions, and this might guarantee its sustainability (KM-SSI, 07/2005/*EI-*

*Obeid*). Local community leaders and grassroots organisations have no information on how the VDOs' constitution was prepared until its final approval by the State Government. However, in term of the concept, they did not reject the idea or the contents of this constitution. The concern here is that the preparation, follow up and approval of such an organisational system that affect or might affect people's lives should be the responsibility of those who are concerned. In fact this could be a learning process for those who are excluded. It could also be an opportunity to communicate with government bureaucrats and establish relationships with related institutions. Because of these exclusive procedures all the members of VDOs who have been interviewed, except those who deal with the credit programme, do not have enough knowledge of the power and objectives of VDOs, and the contents of VDOs' constitutions.

### ***Involving Women in the VDOs***

The project adopted a strategy to confront power-relationship when it decided to form new village organisations, 'VDOs', which consisted of both men and women. This decision was presented in the form of a condition for providing assistance. The idea of involving women in the same committees with men has created tension. Many communities, especially at the beginning, rejected the formation of mixed organisations. Some villages even refused the project interventions for a while before deciding to join again when they heard from other communities about the project's assistance.

Having women in the VDOs does not mean that there was a real change in people's perceptions about the composition of community grassroots organisations. Moreover, the formation of the VDOs themselves did not mean that the old organisations were dissolved. Both men and women were not convinced of the project's vision. They maintained their old organisations, such as the education committee, native administration and *El-Goodeya* council. They also continued to conduct their collective activities through traditional practices. A village leader explained how they responded to project ideology:

'Having women in the Village Development Organisation is not bad. We know that IFAD wants that. The project staff keep talking about gender, gender. So we understood that they wanted the women and men to work together. It is not a problem, but yesterday I invited the men to participate in the *Nafir*. Thirty-four men came and worked for three hours on my farm. I do not want to call the women to help me. We should help them, not ask them to help us. The female farmers did the same; they invited their sisters for *Nafir*' (VL-FGD, 10/2005/ Um-Ruwaba 4).

Despite these realities many research participants confirmed that the establishment of these mixed organisations has created new understandings about women's roles and knowledge. It also influenced peoples (men's and women's) interaction. During a focus group discussion a female participant reflected her view:

'It was a dream to see the village center and hear what men say during committee meetings. Before the project we could not enter that centre, but after that we were able to enter inside, sit and even talk. Men have more knowledge and ideas than us because they travel and listen to outsiders, but we also have our concerns and we all agree about some important issues. Even if the VDO stopped, things have changed. We have started within our communities and households to talk about different topics and men come and tell us what they say here and there' (FP-FGD, 10/2005/ Um-Ruwaba 4).

Despite the variation in extent and quality of their participation from one village to another, it was observed that women from various categories, old and young, married and single were participating in public meetings and the 'project's committees'. This was confirmed to be a new experience. It started with the project interventions and was encouraged by the existence of female staff. However village leaders and men treat women who finished secondary school, university or work as teachers in the villages, differently. Educated women discuss and exchange information about community, make contributions through participating in various events and encourage other women to join development programmes. They also have a say on all internal affairs within the household, such as children's education, home construction and repairs, production and marketing of products.

Although women's participation in the committees has created new insights and helped in creating appreciation for their knowledge it did not change men's perceptions about gender roles and rights. Involvement of women in the project committees and activities did not challenge the traditional division of labour at household level. Because of the traditional

gender division of labour, especially in rural areas, men find it hard to contribute to housework if women decide to participate in all the project activities. Although all of the male interviewees had no objection to women participating in any outdoor activities they find it embarrassing to do the 'women's work' at home.

### ***Who is Benefiting from the VDOs***

Participation offers a way, in theory, for people to have an equal say in decision-making about the issues that affect them (Burke, 1968). However, the constitution of the Village Development Organisations (VDOs) stated clearly that those who will benefit from the credit and the profits from the VDOs' assets are the registered members. Other people have the right to benefit from other social services according to the conditions that would be specified by the VDOs committees. These social services include training, literacy programmes and services provided by trained providers, such as midwives, para vet, pest management and health.

Every year the VDO assets are reviewed and calculated. The profit of the credit fund is divided as follows: 40% for the members; 20% for the board of directors; 20% added to the capital; 10% for the village services; and 10% for unseen services (IFAD, 2002a:2). Other undeclared benefits are participation in meetings, discussions and selection of community representatives, which are guaranteed to registered members only. The poorest groups, who could not afford to pay the membership fees and credit the first instalment (*Sandug's* fees), have no rights, according to the constitution, to attend meetings, nominate or be nominated for VDOs' and its committees. This means that the poorest are deprived of the right to voice out their opinions, select their representatives, or have a chance to be selected. In *Bara 2*, the research participants raised this point as an oppressive and discriminative rule that was never experienced before in their village. A research participant (RP-FGD, 08/2005/ *Bara 2*) explained that the wealthy members in this village decided to pay the membership fees for all the poorest households in order to protect their right to be part of this organisation.

The main concern here is the importance of setting right policy rather than expecting or assuming that communities would respond to overcome the consequences of oppressive regulations. In fact the issue of excluding the poorest households from the VDOs and the credit programme was continuously raised by research participants who expressed their anger

and sadness to see some of them informed openly that they could not be part of this system because they are poor.

Clearly there is genuine interest from members of VDOs' committees in involving all people in general meetings whether they are members in the VDO or not. Although it was against the rules, those who are not registered as project participants usually attended the project meetings. In various villages, it was observed that when the project staff asked the members of the VDO committee to invite the members for meetings they tended to send children to call the people. The invitation is always to everyone. Even those who are not members in the VDOs can attend. This is a traditional right. Local communities used to organise their meetings in the open air, everyone who sees people gathering will just turn up and join the group. In fact the people are the ones who spontaneously brought the project within the communities' indigenous framework.

### ***Sustainability of VDOs***

The VDOs are able, with the help of the project, to manage the credit programme. Their members keep records, collect proposals and communicate with the Agricultural Bank. The VDOs supervised the implementation of the activities that are proposed and supported by the project, such as the establishment of village nurseries, sand dune fixation, rehabilitation of rangeland and supporting the services providers. The VDOs are not able to take over the responsibility of planning and seeking external support for such initiatives. During interviews and PRA sessions, members of VDOs could not identify any external partners, whether private firms, government or international organisations, with which they might cooperate, except the Agricultural Bank of Sudan.

The project staff claimed that they created new local organisations, when they were recombining existing roles of various grassroots organisations. Recognition of this reality would help us to understand the philosophy and operational system of the project and the new organisation. For example as explained in Chapter Seven, the traditional community-based mechanism for conflict resolution is a local organisation called *El-Goodeya* council. This council has continued to conduct its duties for decades. In relation to *El-Goodeya* duties the constitution of this organisation suggests that 'the VDO at the village level will be responsible for conflict resolution' (IFAD, 2002a:4). These VDOs represent the project'

participants who paid the fees and enrolled as members, this means that those who are not members cannot be ruled by the new system. At the same time the constitution did not specify whether the VDO would handle the conflicts between the members or deal with all the community and what would be the case if there were some conflicts between the project participants and non-participants. However, due to the following reasons the locals are attached to *El-Goodeya* council and committed to its rules: 1) as demonstrated in Chapter Seven the council's members are the most respected and trusted members in the community, who are selected according to certain qualities; 2) it represents all the community and no one is excluded; 3) the research participants who are also the project's participants indicated that they were not pleased with the new organisation because of its exclusive nature. The initiation of new structures conditioned the types of participation, as many members did not feel they belonged to it (Lane, 1995). Surprisingly, when all of the project staff who completed the questionnaire outlined in Appendix 4.1 were asked about conflict resolution mechanisms, all identified *El-Goodeya* council and the Native Administration as the most respected and reliable organisations to deal with this issue. None of them referred to the VDOs or its committees.

The large number of committees, having both men and women in the same organisation as well as the election procedure, would risk the sustainability of this structure. In these communities people are used to adopting the concept of consultation rather than nomination and election when selecting community representatives. VDOs are given little responsibilities and decision-making authority. The members of VDOs did not get a chance to participate in the project meetings and monitoring and evaluation, or receive feedback from evaluation missions' reports and findings. IFAD's mission (IFAD, 2004:7) reported that the participatory monitoring of the project activities has not been a primary focus by the monitoring and evaluation officers.

Perhaps it is more certain that these VDOs will close down after the withdrawal of the project and people will continue to function and operate their community affairs through the old structures. Based on this assumption a senior management officer suggested that:

'To avoid such negative consequences the project should negotiate with grassroots organisations and native administration on how they can handle the informal (revolving fund) after the project stop. Especially, in the villages where there are two *sheikhs*. I think these committees will not be sustained after the project. We all know that. They just gather when they see us' (SMO-SI, 10/2005/ *El-Obeid*).

For the time being local communities constructed a separate identity for external interventions. They placed the project committees and activities away from their own. This kind of demarcation created a new identity, which was named after the project. A question that would be raised if the project staff and assistance were not there was 'would its 'committees' and 'ideologies' exist?' A senior project officer responded to this question:

'The committees have lot of responsibilities and should play an important role in developing the local communities. In reality they end by recording the loans and when this stop all these committees will disappear, especially the women's committee. People view the VDOs as a separate body; even the members of the VDO they take any problems or ideas they have to the *Sheikh* or their old committees. They forget to propose their ideas and implement their proposals within these new committees' (SPO-SI, 10/2005/ *Bara*).

In general the project management and staff believed that by having an informed and registered organisation people would be able to communicate directly with local authorities. It has been assumed that government agencies would be more responsive as long as they are aware of the representation power and rights of these VDOs. However, the crucial element here is the knowledge and capacity of the members of these organisations and their ability to communicate, interact and negotiate with outsiders. Obviously, the locals lack that capacity and did not develop these skills while working with the project. Meanwhile, this approved constitution remains documented and might be forgotten after the withdrawal of the project if it is not reviewed, assessed and enhanced through practical actions.

Having examined the role and potential of Village Development Organisations the following section outlines the project interventions and explores people's perceptions.

## **Interventions and Outcomes**

The project organisation and operational structures are designed to ensure the project management has the independent jurisdiction in day-to-day operation and freedom to make any amendments to its plan of action. These amendments should be made to ensure decisive impact and consistent progress in implementation (IFAD, 2004:34). The midterm review mission criticised the project management for not using the project reports for immediate corrective actions but rather used them for documentation (IFAD, 2004:7). Theoretically, the project management has space for adopting a process approach but in practice the picture is quite different. A senior manager explained:

‘The villagers’ needs and their continuous requests for the project to do something about water, education and health problems have forced the development agency and local government to make some changes. We introduced the adult education programme, training of services providers and some technical services in the area of rural water development. The project budget is limited and supposed to cover hundreds of villages. We end up doing small things that touch the problems but do not solve them. We know people are not happy. They have the right to complain and think that the project does not help them. We do not have any power to change the situation. These communities need real and direct government support’ (SMN-SSI, 07/2005).

The project interventions were constructed around the self-help approach. The main assistance was provided in the form of loans, which would be invested by direct beneficiaries (IFAD, 2005). The project also initiated and supported farmers’ demonstration plots and training. The training programme focused on literacy and equipping the villages with service providers, such as midwives, para-vets and primary health workers. The project employed similar interventions in all the targeted villages. This section outlines people’s responses and perceptions on the micro-credit programme, farmers’ demonstration plots and training activities.

### ***Micro Credit Programme***

The micro credit programme is divided into informal credit (village revolving fund) and formal credit (loans from the bank). It is partially funded by the project and applied under certain conditions outlined below.



### **Informal Credit**

The informal credit programme adopted what is locally called *Sandug* (revolving fund). Members of the community who showed interest in benefiting from the informal credit were asked to join the Village Development Organisation, which would be confirmed by paying a membership fee (SDD 500) and the *Sandug* fees (SDD 2,500). The project put no restriction on membership per household, which means that many people from one household can be members and borrow at the same time. The *Sandug*'s members can borrow up to SDD 25,000 to repay within six months, at which time may apply for new loan.

At village level, the informal credit was managed by project credit officers and credit committee members. The project required that rural credit committee members were able to keep accounts and records; therefore there was a tendency to encourage selecting literate members of the communities in the village committees. The project trained some members of the credit committee on managing micro credit. However, it was observed that the project credit officers spent long hours assisting the committee members in recording and updating records while the rest of the field staff were either talking to each other or resting in guests rooms.

The roles of the credit committee are to identify the potential borrowers with viable proposals, offer a group guarantee, and establish a mechanism for following on-time loan repayment. The concept of a group guarantee is that each group is assumed to cover the cost of defaults or repayment delays by individual members. The group is also responsible for ensuring that the repayment is made, otherwise all members will not have access to further credit until the problem is solved.

There are no records about the socio-economic and environmental impact of these loans except what has been revealed by individual research participants based on their personal or others' experiences. Interview data revealed that participation in a micro-credit programme enhanced the economic conditions of some participants. Women participants in micro-credit the programme reported that being members in this revolving fund had enabled them to buy and rear some or more goats, process food, buy and sell some products. Clearly those who cannot afford to pay the membership fees and the first instalment are not entitled to be members and therefore cannot borrow.

'I am a widow with seven children; I do not have the money to pay the membership fees. Someone offered to pay on my behalf. I became a member in the Village Development Organisation. I talked to the credit committee to let me borrow from the *Sandug*. They told me 'no way because you did not pay the *Sandug* fees and we are not sure if you would be able to pay the first installment or not'. We understand that this credit is not for people like us' (FNCP-FGD, 08/2005/ *Bara 2*).

Another woman, through a focus group discussion, confirmed:

'Four of us; myself, my husband and two sons, are members in the VDO and the *Sandug*; therefore every one of us is entitled to get a loan. We bought eight sheep and after a while we sold some to help us repay the loan. Now we have five sheep all ours. Next year we can get another loan and do something else or have more sheep. We know many poor people who did not get any loan, which is not fair. The project should find a way to help them' (FCP-FGD, 08/2005/ *Bara 2*).

In some communities, where there are skilled members, people made initiatives to utilise the informal credit and improve the living conditions of the poor. For example in *Um-Ruwaba 4* the poor families normally abandon their own land or part of it in order to work for rich people and meet their daily needs. The VDO in *Um-Ruwaba 4* introduced a new idea for utilising the informal credit fund; it provided the poor households who joined the *Sandug* with loans for food in order to encourage them to cultivate their farms before thinking to work for rich people. A member of VDO (MVDO-FGD, 10/2005/ *Um-Ruwaba 4*) confirmed that adopting this idea has created a shortage of labour in the village and increased the labour rate, which benefited those who finished early and worked for others. Households, who did not need food for work, chose to buy gas stoves. During a focus group discussion, the female participants identified the following benefits of using gas for cooking instead of traditional fuel wood stoves: it is clean, fast and saved them about three hours, which they used to spend every two to three days (FP-FGD, 10/2005/ *Um-Ruwaba 4*). Their experiences with gas stoves encouraged many others to approach the Village Development Organisation (VDO) and apply for loans. Experiences in *Bara 2* where some people paid membership fees for others along with new innovations made by VDO in *Um-Ruwaba 4* indicated that people could cooperate and make initiatives when provided with information and resources.

The wealthier groups in different communities decided not to place those who joined the project's credit programme in higher category. They explained that there is no clear change in people's wealth as a result of the credit programme. They strongly believed that having

two goats or sheep or borrowing an amount of SDD 20,000 will never make a real change in anyone's life. The focus group participants justified their decisions by explaining that the loan borrowed by poor and middle class families was small, and if two or three members in a household decided to borrow they must repay back larger installments. In general the utilisation of informal credit in the research participating villages as well as in other villages, seen through project reports, indicated that the borrowers had considered the household's interest and needs first. For example although the collection of fuel wood was women's responsibility, 63% of those who used the loans for buying gas and kerosene stoves were men (IFAD, 2004).

### **Formal Credit**

The formal credit is implemented through the ABS. The bank requires the fulfillment of the following conditions in order to receive a financial credit: 1) having knowledge and experiences of proposed project's activities; 2) union's or organisation's guarantee or Social Fund guarantee; 3) residential certificate from the popular committee; 4) opening an account with the bank; and 5) signing a contract.

The bank's investment officers, who receive incentives from IFAD, prepare the feasibility studies for proposed projects and the Agricultural Bank of Sudan deals with loan defaulters. During the fieldwork, two members of VDO (*Bara 1*) were in jail, because they failed to repay the loan (MVPC-FGD, 08/2005/ *Bara 1*). This created bad feeling about the banks, particularly among women. In these communities, standing in front of a formal court or being sent to jail does not look right and is completely unacceptable for women.

Those who benefit from the formal micro credit (bank's loan) are the relatively wealthy and most of them have previous experience with the banks. A well-off participant in *Bara 2* explained:

'I have an account with another bank but I benefit from the facilities offered by the project (group's guarantee). In this village, six people borrowed from the Agricultural Bank. All of them are rich. You know! It is a chance and we have to make use of it' (RRP-FGD, 08/2005/ *Bara 2*).

Another ABS borrower, in *Bara 1*, indicated that he and other wealthy households in the village benefited from the Agricultural Bank of Sudan (ABS) offer and borrowed SDD 200,000 (approximately US\$1000) each. This case was repeated in all communities that were interviewed. Almost all wealthy people who participated in this study benefited from the formal credit.

The participants from the ABS explained that the bank's main interest is to get the money back and ensure that the borrowers have viable projects and able to deposit certain amount after opening an account with the bank. Poor people and middle class groups cannot approach the ABS because they lack the ability to deal with the bank's procedures and conditions or are scared of the risk. As argued by Remenyi (1991) risk-taking is an issue for the poor, for them the consequences of failure could be disastrous for the survival of the business and to the survival of family.

Even for informal credit paying the *Sandug* fees as well as the repayment condition were always a problem for the poorest families, which is seen by the project evaluation mission (IFAD, 2004:30) as well as the research participants as a constraint that hindered many poor from benefiting from the revolving fund. However, in *Um-Ruwaba 4* a group of rich people decided to pay the VDO and *Sandug* fees and offered to give their turn for borrowing from the *Sandug* to the poorest households. A poor household argued:

‘Yes they paid for us the membership and *Sandug* fees but the repayments start before you benefit from the loan. Other people have some other savings to pay from it while they are waiting, but me, what am I going to do?’ (PFP-SSI, 10/2005/ *Um-Ruwaba 4*).

The capacity of the poor to save and start repaying the loan before benefiting from the investment is almost impossible. Those who borrowed knew from the beginning that the repayment would be made from other resources rather than this investment. Some participants resell one sheep or a goat to repay the loan.

The resources provided by the project were not enough to mobilise the members of the community or reduce the male urban-migration. When the project participants found that there were no more resources to be offered and their main problems were still there they began to show their frustration. Some openly expressed their reluctance and lack of interest

in having the project in the villages. For them it was waste of time to attend non-productive meetings.

Other interventions are examined are demonstration plots and the literacy programme.

### ***Farmers' Demonstration Plots***

The project introduced the activity of demonstration plots aiming to introduce farmers to new techniques. The criteria for selection of participants are: willingness to participate and apply the extension packages that are recommended by technical staff; the demonstration plot should be accessible; participant farmers should comply with the repayment procedure and allow visitors to enter his/her farm. This activity involved those who showed an interest in participating and accepted the above-mentioned conditions. The project called them 'model farmers'. Those model farmers are well off or landowners who could offer to specify a piece of land for adopting such a trial. Apparently the poorest who cannot afford to provide some requirement of adopting the new techniques such as cost of improved seeds and land preparation, will not participate.

As part of its interventions the project offered a range of training programmes that dealt with issues such as adult literacy, nutrition, food processing, child health, sanitation and hygiene. Some literate members in the communities benefited from the training opportunities and worked as service providers such as midwife and health services providers. The role of this group has been appreciated by villagers and has benefited, to some extent, everyone. But still people have to go to the cities for medical services. However the most important component in this training programme is adult literacy.

### ***The Literacy Programme***

The adult literacy programme aimed to teach the participants literacy and numeracy. It contained some education material about morals, values, family and communities' rights and obligations. This programme is implemented under the supervision of the Directorate of Adult education. It utilised the free services offered by new university graduates who should work, two years for free, before joining the workforce. The project provided the teaching materials, motivating the communities and paying incentives for the teachers. The literacy course continued for six month, six days a week and two hours daily. In each village two

women were given more training and selected as volunteers to sustain this programme after the first year. The literacy programme cannot be organised during the rainy season because no one will sacrifice his/her farm to attend the course, while organising the course during the off season prevents most men from attending as they will be outside the villages. The attendance rate varied between villages and gender and is analysed in Table 8.3. This rate was very high among women of which 95% who attended this programme were women. As indicated in Chapter Seven men usually leave the villages after harvesting the products to seek jobs in the cities. However, many of the men who stayed in the village did not join the literacy programme. Some are busy in their work and some refused to join a class where literacy teachers were women.

The female credit participants appreciated the literacy programme, which allowed them to apply for loans, fill the forms, and sign the contracts. Research participants acknowledged the information received during the course, which was confirmed to have significant social impact. A female member of the Village Popular Committee in *Bara 1* explained:

‘Now we have learned to read and sign contracts. We have also learned our rights and responsibilities towards our families, children, neighbours, and the rest of the community. We have new topics to talk about. Some of us even have better relationships with their husbands’ (FVPC-SSI, 08/2005/ *Bara 1*).

**Table 8.3: Social Skills Training: Literacy Programme**

Year	No. of Villages	Participants			Men %
		Men	Women	Total	
2001	18	0	1376	1376	0
2002	50	300	4004	4304	7
2003	50	70	2507	2628	3
2004	50	121	2507	2185	6
<b>Total</b>	<b>168</b>	<b>491</b>	<b>10,394</b>	<b>10,493</b>	<b>5</b>

Source: Produced from the Project Reports (2001-2004).

Some children, mainly those that had dropped-out of primary school, were targeted by the literacy programme in order to return them back to formal education. The literacy

programme was stopped after the first group graduated. This was due to the fact that the two female literacy teachers, who were offered more training in order to sustain this programme, lacked the confidence and explained that people did not trust them and refused to attend their class. A member of VPC in *Bara 1* confirmed that:

‘After the first training course the project chose two young women and offered them more training. Those two women were assumed to volunteer and continue teaching the others. Even women who did not attend the first course were not willing to be taught by those ‘girls’. People did not believe they could teach. Even when there were proper teachers, men completely refused to be taught by women’ (MVPC-FGD, 08/2005/ *Bara 1*).

In addition to micro credit, demonstration plots and training the project offered opportunities for each administrative unit to choose a project to serve 20-25 villages such as a school or hospital, the cost of which did not exceed three millions Sudanese Dinar. The project contributed 60% of the cost while the communities are requested to cover the rest of the cost. For example in *Wadashana*’a city the project coordinated with local government authorities and community organisations to rehabilitate the main hospital and the girls’ secondary school. It included building two classrooms in the school and buying a new electric generator, while the hospital was offered full maintenance of their electric power and water network.

Being an observing participant allowed me to record some concerns in relation to these interventions. These concerns were related to staff technical capabilities, people’s priorities, sustainability and the project reporting system. The following section looks at these issues and concerns.

## **General Concerns**

### ***Professionals’ Technical Capacity: Limited Trust***

The micro credit programme focused on providing loans and making investments. Meanwhile some critical aspects such as kind of investment were not carefully considered, meaning that this programme was not accompanied by technical assistance, which might open spaces for various income generating activities. Credit participants depend on their own knowledge and skills to utilise the loan. Few participants were engaged in food processing

while the majority focused on choosing the investment, which they know, mainly raising livestock. However raising livestock in marginalised arid zones is not free of risk. The difficulty in storing fodder for dry seasons put animals under risk of shortage of feed, especially where there are two consequent poor rainy seasons.

Development projects must be aware of the side effect of such interventions. For example increasing livestock density, specifically goats, in marginalised land that is affected by desertification and desert encroachment is not recommended (NRS-SSI, 10/2005). A project specialist expressed his concern:

‘This credit programme focuses on encouraging women to buy goats because it is cheap and they do not need special fodder or herders to look after them. In fact goats are very dangerous in some environments like North Kordofan. We are suffering from desertification and we need a tremendous effort to regain the previous vegetation cover. We made our points about this credit trend but the credit programme’s officers and gender specialists wanted to make achievements therefore we failed to stop that’ (NRS-SSI, 10/2005).

It has been observed that all demonstrated plots that were visited during the fieldwork have adopted the agro-forestry system. Some of them planted some exotic trees like Neem, which meant that after two or three years the land could not be planted by other crops, and utilised by owners for a long period of time. Employing the agro-forestry system in the semi arid zone of North Kordofan is an advisable strategy to restore the deteriorated environment and combat desertification. The villagers in the project area are well aware of the value of planting trees, especially after drought and famine experiences. Many research participants confirmed that they bought the *Acacia senegalensis* (gum arabic/ *Hashab* tree) seeds and planted them. A male farmer explained:

‘It was almost fifteen years ago when I removed the Hashab trees from about 60 hectares and sold it in the market. At that time, I wanted to have a lot of money at once. That was an act I still regret very much. Production of gum arabic is a sustainable source of income, especially when the rain is not enough to have good agricultural crops. It also improves soil fertility and allows for intercropping. However last year I started to buy the seeds and replant it again. I do not need someone to tell me what to plant. I know what suits us and I have learned from the experience’ (MFR-FGD, 10/2005/ *Um-Ruwaba 3*).



This means that many native species that have multi purpose benefits will suit this fragile environment. What is required is to share knowledge with local communities.

The following recorded notes were part of the project's meeting with the local communities in *Bara 2* (08/2005). The project staff arrived seven hours late and the men refused to call the women to attend the meeting after they had waited so long. However my presence as a researcher and a visitor relieved the tension. A group of twelve men agreed to wait and discuss some issues with the project staff and tell me about their experiences. The village leader told the staff openly that they were not interested in wasting more time with IFAD as long as they had nothing new to offer, particularly if they were not going to help them solve the drinking water problem or support the school. During the meeting the villagers raised some issues relating to improved seed and fodder supply. People refused to take the improved fodder, which was brought by the project. It was assumed by the project this fodder would save the animals lives. It was also expected that the livestock owners would pay the cost. However that was in early August and the land was completely covered with green grasses. The following conversation was recorded:

**Project officer**           What do you think about the new improved groundnuts seeds, we sent to you?

**Villager**                    We do not know, because we did not plant them.

**Project officer:**       Really! Why?

**Villager:**                Because when you sent them it was too late. The time for planting the groundnuts was over.

**Project officer:**       So, what did you do with the improved seeds?

**Villager:**                People ate them they were not bad.

**Project officer:**       OK. That is fine but now we brought a stock of fodder to be sold to those who need it.

**VDO Chairperson:** The animals now are healthy and eating the best fodder and no one needs it or will buy it. Even animals will not eat it since they have their favorable grasses. Why you did not bring it three months ago?

(Project Meeting, 08/2005/ *Bara 2* / Field note)

Another example that demonstrated the kind of interaction between the project and the Village Development Organisation (VDO) was recorded in *Um-Ruwaba I*. After a focus group discussion a fieldworker asked the members of VDO to show us the village nursery and community woodlot. The nursery was established in the backyard of a fenced well to enable ease of protecting and watering of the seedlings. The responsibility of running this nursery was left to one member of VDO. When we went to this nursery the supervisor told us that all the seedlings had died and nothing was left. He stated that 'I continued watering and weeding for the last six weeks, and after that I asked the committee to distribute the work between all of us or ask some other people to volunteer. They did not make a decision and none of them come to help me. So I locked the gate and forgot about it' Field notes, 12/09/2005).

This above example is similar to the WNASP experiences in the White Nile State. The collapse of villages and schools nurseries in the WNASP sites happened after the withdrawal of the project. However, this incident in *Um-Ruwaba* was not known by the project, or even by all the committee's members. It raises a question about the Village Development Organisation's commitment and capacity to plan and supervise such community affairs. Secondly, it also points at the project approach and staff capability in following up and helping the committees to develop a workable plan. Clearly, there is a danger of introducing new activities without having a clear vision of how it could be operated. In fact the local communities have experiences with many ongoing activities that were planned, implemented and sustained by local grassroots organisations. These ongoing activities such as construction and maintenance of schools, mosques, community centers, as well as the organisation of group weddings and childcare activities were initiated by individuals or groups who committed themselves to this work. This indicates that within the communities there are many individuals and groups who are willing to run and manage community programmes. The question is who are the right people for a certain task? It is the responsibility of the Village Development Organisation and the project to identify how such an activity or intervention would be implemented.

### ***Priorities and Sustainability: Everyone's Concern***

The overall approach to development was designed and decided by the project. When locals were asked to draw their priorities of needs the first priority was for water followed by health and education services. The project began with its pre-planned activities: literacy and training the service providers. A senior programme manger (SPM-SSI, 07/2005/NKS) blamed the government for not designing a project that clearly responded to people's needs. A former project officer (FPO-SSI, 07/2005/ *El-Obeid*/NKS) revealed that people in North Kordofan called the project activities 'cartoon activities', which refers to small-scattered activities that do not solve people's real problems. In fact, sustainability of the project's interventions is quite questionable and cannot be fully assured. The most important achievements made by the project were training of service providers, approximately one per village. The continuity of their services cannot be guaranteed; some of them particularly men had already left the job because, financially, it was not worth staying in the village. Some women also moved with their families to other villages or cities.

Ninety percent of the project's technical and field staff who took part in the structured interview expected that the main development interventions, such as the credit programme, women committees, and development organisations would collapse or stop. All of them expected that female service providers would continue as long as they were living in the village, while male service providers might not stay if they found better opportunities.

### ***Reporting and Assessment***

The outcomes of the project interventions are a concern for the project management. It justified the development agency and government inputs. In fact the existence of indicators helped the project to determine and measure its quantitative achievements (ODA, 1995), which are significantly important as evidence for development providers (SMN-SSI, 07/2005). On the other hand communities might not have perceived these indicators or outcomes to be valuable. In this regard some incidents were not recorded. For example the outcomes of that meeting between the project and community in *Bara 2* would not have been recorded in the project records nor would the amount of groundnuts that were not planted be deleted from the amount distributed as improved seeds. It was also noted that during this meeting (in *Bara 2*) the project staff (two females and two males) neither reported the cases nor the points that were raised by the participants. In fact there is little reason to believe that

all of what had been recorded is achieved or implemented. The seeds or seedlings might be distributed to the villagers but the questions that need to be reported are: did they plant them? If yes, what is the survival rate? What are the benefits or difference from previous varieties?

During the fieldwork it was observed that the project staff never recorded villagers' concerns or complaints, which entailed some important issues such as staff responsiveness, failure to respond in the right time and collapse of some activities. However, none of the project reports showed the relevance of various interventions and their impact on participants' lives.

**Table 8.4: NKRDP: Stakeholders Roles and Challenges**

Stakeholders	Expected role	Role played				Challenges
		N	L	M	H	
Local Primary Participants	Consultation		*			High level of illiteracy. Poor infrastructure. Poverty. Limited knowledge of alternative models or intermediate Technology. Lack of skills. Limited citizen's rights.
	Adoption of new technology		*			
	Acceptance of socially Challenging approaches		*			
	Adopting self –help Approach			*		
	Implementation of proposed Activities			*		
	Contribution to decision-making: at local level		*			
	Participate in monitoring and evaluation		*			
	Coordination with outsiders	*				
Project Management /Staff	Participatory management	*				Limited participative culture. Limited technical skills. Narrow participatory approaches. Project pre-set strategy.
	Coordination with outsiders		*			
	Work facilitation			*		
	Technical inputs			*		
State Government Institutions	Provision of public services		*			Lack of transparency. Behaviour and attitudes. Mismanagement of resources.
Regional NGOs	Advocating		*			Behaviour and attitudes.
	Raising awareness	*				
	Coordination/facilitation	*				
Grassroots Organisations	Community development		*			Limited resources. Exclusion. Lack of relationships with government authorities. Lack of skills.
	Social cohesiveness				*	
	Conflicts resolution				*	

N= Nil, L= Low, M= Medium, H= High

Source: Fieldwork results, 2005.

The projects documents and the staff's verbal language and responses to interviews, showed that the need for participation is seen as the central element to the whole process. However,

in practice, the planning procedure for the project focused mainly on participation in implementation, and sharing benefits and resources. It seems that people (targeted groups) have little say on what is planned, delivered, and implemented by the project. Table 8.4 illustrates that the project's primary participants have limited contribution to decision making processes, monitoring and evaluation. They also have limited citizen's rights and lacked skills to coordinate with outsiders. Apparently the project plays the main role in various processes such as leading negotiations about training, budget, awareness campaign, credit, cost recovery, women's role and involvement in project activities. Meanwhile, communities' participation in decision-making and/or in monitoring and evaluation is limited or does not exist.

Having explored the project's interventions and other issues that related to the staff's technical capability, sustainability, and reporting systems the following section briefly outlines the factors that influence the extent and quality of people's participation.

### **Factors Influencing Participation**

There are many factors that have influenced the extent and quality of people's participation in the project. Some are attributed to the project while others are related to government and local communities. In summary employing many restrictions by the project and the Agricultural Bank of Sudan has resulted in excluding the poorest categories and prohibited them from participating in the micro credit programme. Meanwhile, it has also determined the extent and quality of participation among rich and middle class categories. The project interventions have been accompanied by many shortcomings; those who have gained the most are the 'well-off', followed by middle-income earners, and then the poorest. With respect to micro credit whether it is formal or informal the poorest have almost gained nothing. The poorest groups do not have enough resources to participate in this 'self-help' programme. They usually do not have enough land and input to adopt the new farming techniques.

Despite its claim about adopting a participatory approach the project, in practice, has adopted a conventional system that has restricted people's participation in planning, monitoring and evaluation, and decision-making processes. Time and disbursement pressure as well as failure of the staff to communicate among each other and share knowledge with local

communities has had a negative effect on the outcomes of the participatory process and the project reputation. On the other hand, government agencies do not offer support for poor communities and build their capabilities. Meanwhile, communities also lack skills and information on how to communicate and build relationships with outsiders.

## **Summary and Conclusion**

This chapter examined the North Kordofan project's approaches and mechanisms and explored the issues that emerged as a result of its interventions. The project interventions were guided by the self-help and gender mainstreaming approaches. Assistance was provided in the form of micro credit, training and awareness. The project design focused on building local capacity, networks and serving the poor villages. However, some well-off villages were selected and that influenced the project's credibility. The project's philosophy was based on creating a self-reliant community, which entailed achieving empowerment. In practice it focused on promoting efficiency rather than building the locals' capacities or helping them to establish links and relationships with development providers.

The project used the PRA methods to identify people's needs and priorities. However, the outcomes of this process were not considered when plans were designed. This chapter has highlighted how the project enforced its own ideology despite the local communities' objection when establishing new mix organisations with new regulations. It has been explained how the project exercised an oppressive power when it was decided to pull out of the villages that rejected its participatory mechanism. It also revealed that creating new organisations was not necessarily more inclusive; rather it excluded the neediest groups within the community.

The North Kordofan Rural Project played the main role in the planning and management processes. It did not involve the members of the new organisations in planning and decision-making nor did it continuously consult them on various interventions. This suggested that the outcomes of these processes could not be seen as transformative as long as the communities were not involved in decision-making process, networking and their needs and priorities were not fully considered.

By enforcing its ideology and hiring female staff the project succeeded in involving women in the new committees, micro credit and training programmes. Literacy programmes have raised women's awareness and improved their skills in performing their traditional responsibilities. Moreover, involving women in the committees has changed men's perceptions about women's knowledge and capabilities. However, this did not change the traditional belief about gender division of labour. In contrast despite the project emphasis on gender and development approach it has failed to address young men's concerns.

This case revealed that not all of those classified as 'powerful' clung to power just as the literature suggests they will. Within these communities some rich and influential individuals are attracted by the concept of doing good deeds and will try to spare time and energy for their communities.

This chapter highlighted that the extent and quality of people's participation was influenced by development providers' policies, credibility and staff behaviours as well as the Agricultural Bank of Sudan's borrowing conditions and the communities' values, skills and financial capabilities.

The following chapter discusses the main themes that emerge from both case studies and suggests some measures for enhancing the outcomes of participatory development projects in Sudan.

## **Chapter Nine: Reflections on Participatory Development in Sudan**

### **Introduction**

The previous three chapters have reported on the case studies of the White Nile Agricultural Services Project (WNASP) and the North Kordofan Rural Development Project (NKRDP), which were implemented by International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) and the Government of Sudan. The WNASP was taken as a secondary case study, considering that the project was phased out in 2001 and many of its development actors are no longer present in the field. The case study provided an opportunity to explore the perceptions of the villagers and local key informants after the withdrawal of the project's staff and assets. It also demonstrated how local communities responded to the project's new ideas, such as the micro credit programme, delivery of loans and women's involvement. On the other hand, the NKRDP was a major case study, due to the fact that the entire units of analysis were there, especially the project staff and its formal partners. These conditions helped in exploring and analysing the nature and potential of the project's intervention in more depth. In this case study (NKRDP) the indigenous participatory values, structures and practices were explored in order to examine the nature of interaction between the project system and local systems.

The projects were implemented in two different socio-economic settings. Both projects delivered their assistance through microfinance as a way of creating self-reliant communities as well as strengthening the grassroots organisations in order to take the responsibility for development. The projects employed various development approaches in order to encourage people's participation, their design focused on participation as a means as well as an end. By adopting the two perspectives, which were explained in chapter two, the development providers thought that participation would achieve efficiency, effectiveness, sustainability and empowerment.

Sudanese society is characterised by strong social ties and bonds between people as relatives, neighbours and friends, especially in rural areas. The concept of sharing, giving, and helping others is deeply rooted in people's history, culture, consciousness and very much reflected in their daily practices. Life's hardships and urban migrations as a result of drought and lack of poor public services have created frustration and social ill-being, especially in North



Kordofan and the White Nile States. Therefore both projects aimed to improve the living conditions of rural communities and empower the local organisations.

This chapter discusses the central themes that have emerged from previous chapters. These themes are: policies and credibility of development providers, development professionals' behaviour, power relations, formation of community organisations, gender issues, indigenous values, and structures and practices. These themes offered a base to understand the nature and the potential of participatory development interventions and the factors that influenced its outcomes. This chapter provides suggestions for improving the practice of participatory development programmes and projects in Sudan.

## **Policies and Credibility of Development Providers**

Development providers, whether they are governments, bilateral and multilateral agencies or international and national non-governmental organisations, play a significant role through their policies and professional staff. This section examines the role and contribution of development providers.

### ***Government Role***

Although decentralisation was adopted in Sudan in 1970, the reality is that systems are still highly centralised. Research participants at local level in both North Kordofan and the White Nile States repeatedly confirmed that governments, whether they are federal or state governments, exist, rule and serve the capitals, and their officials are serving themselves and their own people. However, to have transformative participatory local governance there is a need to have a strong central state capacity, a well developed civil society and an organised political force with strong social movement (Hellers, 2001).

The government's Comprehensive Development Strategy (CDS) (1992-2002) and 'Triple Programme for Economic and Institutional Salvation' (TPEIS) indicated that the government philosophy is in favour of liberalisation and a free market economy, to induce economic growth and development (Sudan Government, 1997:81). The CDS and TPEIS encouraged people's participation to create a social balance and protect the weaker groups from the negative effects of the free market economy policies. The CDS formed a base for the

strategies that were adopted by development projects, especially those projects implemented by multilateral development agencies. Accordingly, the Federal Government together with the State Governments negotiated and accepted loans-based assistance through IFAD for implementing the WNASP and the NKRDP.

It appeared that both projects were an opportunity for the government and implementing agency to engage in a partnership that promoted their ideologies. The government needed international support to implement its development strategy. On the other hand, IFAD tended to offer assistance through loans, which were made available under certain conditions, such as contribution of 'beneficiaries' and other partners (government and local banks). The WNASP and the NKRDP documents referred clearly to development agency inputs and approach, which aimed to support the government's efforts in promoting privatisation and decentralisation. It was assumed that this would lead to empowerment of people at grassroots levels in order to take over the responsibility of developing themselves (IFAD, 2002b:2; IFAD, 2004:12/37). The relationship between the projects and the government was constructed around political and economic themes. Involvement in supporting decentralisation and privatisation issues indicated that the development agency is involved in political agendas that encouraged participation of community organisations in market-led development (Hulme and Edwards, 1997). In this regard the new agenda focuses on withdrawal of the state while supporting participatory governance (Schneider, 1999). Therefore the WNASP and NKRDP focused on microfinance and empowering of grassroots organisations through joint efforts with state institutions.

Through the self-help approach, the project interventions tried to bridge the gap between development providers' priorities and locals' priorities while seriously addressing people's needs. Both project documents referred to poor communities as their concern and targeted groups. It was assumed these communities would benefit directly or indirectly from the projects' interventions. Accordingly the project's initial messages were meant to reach them and ensure their participation. Later it became clear that there were some criteria for attaining the projects' assistance. It appeared that those who were excluded were the poor, as they could not fulfill the projects' conditions such as paying the membership fees and having land. Some activities such as public meetings, and literary and nutrition classes brought large numbers of people into the projects. This interaction had served both actors' objectives; the projects had the opportunity to bring large numbers of people to their ideologies and recorded

measurable achievements, while villagers had placed themselves within the projects scope expecting and aiming to get some benefits.

Nevertheless, there were some communities and individuals who benefited more from the projects than others. The research participants in the WNASP and the NKRDP believed that those communities who had influential members would always be privileged and would be given priorities when there was a development project. These created a lack of trust and respect for government authorities. The state claimed to adopt the concepts of participation, equity, and self-reliance. In practice state institutions and bureaucrats did not honour their commitments. Almost everybody interviewed attributed the lack of services and deteriorating living conditions to the government. Chandulal (1999:11), in his analysis of the government's Comprehensive Development Strategy (CDS) and 'Triple Programme for Economic and Institutional Salvation' (TPEIS), argues that the implementation of these programmes has increased poverty and inflation.

The attitude of government officials has influenced people's concepts and perceptions about the roles and importance of education. The dominant attitudes among politicians, leaders and influential officials, who have an education, are to serve and privilege those whom they have personal relations with, such as relatives, friends, and members of the same tribe or political party. As a result research participants viewed education as a process through which people could find a way to be part of the decision-making process and to access resources and hence be able to benefit and help their own people or locality. Despite the benefits that could be gained by certain communities, this attitude gradually started to create division, hatred and conflicts. Most of the internal conflict in Sudan, whether in the South, Darfur or East Sudan, was started by groups who believed that development plans and allocation of resources were privileging some regions and groups (MA-SSI, 07/2005). They accused the central government of excluding and marginalising their regions and people. There is a need to develop justice and equality through the law and balanced development strategies. The state governments need to ensure the engagement of ordinary people in the decision-making process, especially when allocating resources for development.

As a result of power impacts in the WNASP some people accessed the loans and some did not. This created negative images about the project's local partners (farmers'organisations and national banks). Moreover, people's previous experiences with aid agencies that used to

deliver free assistance, as well as their own view about government money, diminished their commitment to repay loans. As a result the development agency adopted a different strategy in the NKRDP. It focused on getting guarantees, and consequently employed a plan that turned out to be more exclusive. Members of the communities were asked to register as members in the Village Development Organisations (VDOs), pay a membership fee and a first installment for the village's revolving fund (*Sandug*) before being recognised as participants and being eligible for loans. The poorest categories failed to fulfill these requirements and hence did not participate in the programme. Experience with formal credit, which in both case studies was delivered through the banks, indicated that the majority of the villagers did not have money to deposit or fulfill the banks' conditions.

The projects' efficiency argument, which focused on beneficiaries' contributions, was based on theoretical assumptions rather than empirical evidence and understanding of socio-economic conditions in the selected areas. However, in order to bring development into microfinance, this research supports Remenyi's (1991) and Otero's (2005) suggestions that programmes of finance for the poor should adopt and consider their reality. Otero (2005:10-13) suggested that microfinance should serve the poor, rely on permanent institutions and should be linked to the financial system of the country.

At the beginning, the participatory ideology was used by the projects to create awareness and a strong response. Awareness campaigns, and mobilization, and extension meetings were conducted, which was resulted in a large number of the community joining the projects. For example, the NKRDP staff believed that people's consciousness must be raised before starting real activities on the ground. Based on this, the project adopted intensive awareness and animation campaigns. This approach, despite its importance, did not suit every local circumstance. Some communities, such as NKRDP/*Um-Ruwaba 2*, with strong and active grassroots organisations and a strong popular movement, found this programme boring and a waste of time. Participation theorists argue that people who have previous experiences and skills should be given a chance to develop their own thoughts and knowledge (Lane, 1995; Freire, 1998). These efforts attracted people's participation when resources were provided but failed to sustain the WNASP interventions when the flow of resources stopped. This indicates that when the project stopped, people were not capable of sustaining any of its activities. Fernando, (1995:181) asserts that ideology may elicit participation in the short term, but it cannot sustain it in the absence of adequate resources. Experiences with some

community activities, such as schools and village nurseries, and nutrition classes, indicated that local people had no stake in maintaining practices once the flow of resources or incentives stopped (Pretty and Scoones, 1995:159).

The poor, who were struggling on a daily basis to meet their basic needs, had no time or resources to offer in the self-help development approach, which was employed by development providers as a tool to promote the free market policies. The self-help approach that was adopted by the projects denied people the right to health, education and so on. It focused on people being responsible for providing themselves with whatever services they needed. Clearly the local communities lacked the capacity to be fully responsible for all community affairs. Vincent (2004) suggests that participatory development requires that the change made to those who are targeted by development interventions is appropriate to their needs. However, it appears that the projects' interventions were designed from the government and funding agency perspectives, which might conflict with locals' perspectives. The application of government agenda and development agency strategies were confronted by local realities that were characterised by high levels of poverty and illiteracy as well as communities' views about government development projects and external development agencies. Research participants in many villages revealed that the projects, with their new self-help approach, were becoming a burden. More activities were proposed, more visitors arrived at villages and the continuous field visits that were made by project staff required all or some of the community members to contribute. As explained in Chapter Two, Berner and Phillips (2005) criticised the way this approach has been applied. The Self-help capacity of people needs to be explored and made visible before adopting such an approach. Berner and Phillips (2005:27) suggest that it is important to recognise the capability of the poor to act as agents in their own development without falling into the neo-liberal trap. If development providers have released themselves from providing resources needed by poor communities to improve their living conditions, would they be capable of offering guidance and proper technical solutions, which might justify their involvement?

Despite the government's ambitious programmes and expectations, as stated in the Comprehensive Development Strategy, the projects' contributions in achieving the ultimate outcomes of this strategy were very limited. The projects' participants were neither involved in productive activities that might create economic growth and promote the government policies nor were they convinced of the new socio-political structure, which were supported

or established by the projects. According to Williams (2004:94) limited engagement reflects a passive resistance to the 'tyranny of participation'. However, the funding of both projects was based on a loan-financing system, which meant that it was the legal and moral responsibility of governments to ensure that the money was spent properly and achieved the planned objectives. Donors who provide funds must know their moral responsibility and make sure that the funds are well spent, otherwise the process of borrowing and paying back impoverishes future generations rather than enriching them (Stiglitz, 2002:176).

Despite the negative images people have about the government, in both projects sites, recent changes have taken place. The state government in North Kordofan State (NKRDP) succeeded in developing participatory policies and strategies. These new policies if supported would be a base for making a shift towards participatory governance and development. The main constraints would be the availability of resources and the willingness of development agencies to make a positive move towards changing their strategies and staff behaviour. Central government and development agencies needed to make a shift and accommodate innovative local strategies that involve local organisations and encourage the traditional participatory practices. These insights if taken together to help in designing development interventions could create a shift in the practice of participatory development projects.

The state appears to be an important development actor, particularly where local communities lack the essential public services. Improving living standards for rural people and empowering them to achieve greater control over the circumstances and decisions, which shape their lives, requires a change in officials' attitudes and behaviours. In Sudan there is no commitment to planned policies, rule of system and consideration of people's rights to press for resources and services. Developing a sense of obligation and responsibility towards the broader community is a prerequisite for changing the formal system. Development agendas in the new millennium suggest that participation has a crucial role to play as a transformative tool. Participatory development theorists (Chapter Two) assert that the main challenge for the 21st century is to build relationships between ordinary people and institutions that affect their lives, especially those of government. To build new relationships between local people and the state institutions this research supports the literature (Gaventa, 2004:27; Williams, 2004:95), which offered two approaches: 1) strengthening the processes of citizen's participation through designing new forms of inclusion, consultation and /or mobilisation in order to inform and to influence institutions and policies; and 2)

strengthening the accountability and responsiveness of those institutions and policies, through changing their institutional design and focusing on the structure of good governance

Furthermore, education is an essential element in the development process. It has a fundamental role in building knowledge and skills, and developing values of cooperation and sharing. Bordenave (1994) asserts that preparing people to be good decision makers in a democratic, participative society could be achieved through a proper education system. The present national education policies, public perceptions about the role of education, and the schooling system, do not help in preparing participative and fair decision-makers. The national education policies have distorted the images and meanings of education. Therefore, there is a need for making a shift in this area.

### ***Development Agencies' Concerns***

The widely shared view in community development is that people's participation in development interventions will enhance efficiency, effectiveness, sustainability and empowerment (Karl, 2000:109). From both case studies it was evident that the monitoring and evaluation procedure was based on a pre-structured system. It recorded, evaluated and reviewed their programmes against the original documented objectives, plans and pre-determined indicators. The external evaluators visited the projects' sites to make their own judgments and recommendations without involving the communities in this process. Participants from community development organisations revealed that they had no idea about the evaluation mission's tasks or their findings. The projects' authoritarian and rigid systems had maintained the exclusive environment in the WNASP and created a similar situation in NKRDP.

The success of a development agency in implementing its programmes and achieving tangible results would have definitely been an indication of its future and reputation as well as staff careers. When a development agency succeeds in presenting its achievement in a convincing way, then it maintains its relationship with a recipient country and ensures its continuity as a development provider. Meanwhile their staff have their own personal interests. They are concerned about keeping their jobs and future opportunities. This would explain why the development agency and their project staff often focus on achieving more tangible outputs rather than adopting true people-centred concepts which are demanding approaches that require time, resources and long-term commitment.

Development agencies have been blamed for wasting resources and abusing the trust of the donors who have assumed that their inputs would create changes in people's lives. Apparently, development agencies are not concerned about initiating and establishing a transformative system that may create real development. The ways they operate make genuine participatory approaches difficult or even impossible to apply (Schneider and Libercier, 1995b: 48). This offers limited opportunities for building local people's capacity (Bagadion and Kortton, 1991:73). It was evident from some participants' responses that development agencies need to change their programme if they have a real intention to create a tangible change in people's lives. An international NGO's employee explained:

'Large amounts of the organisation's fund goes to salaries, training of the staff and running costs, such as rent and fuel. What is left for development is a very small amount. As an international NGOs' employee and a leader of a local NGO, I feel that, I developed myself rather than developing the others' (FA-SSI, 07/2005/ *Khartoum*).

Another former UN employee confirmed:

'Unfortunately, development agencies focus on producing and printing large amount of papers, full of numbers and achievements to convince the donors, and ensure the continuity of finance. They never make real changes in people's lives. Development agencies did not need evidence on the ground; only big reports and media coverage that showed their seminars, conferences and meetings, and hence donors would be pleased. In fact, this was my personal reason for resigning from my previous job and developing my own business. I felt 'we the professionals' were cheating the poor just for the sake of having big salaries and status' (BWF-FGD, 07/2005/ *Khartoum*).

A development officer at the UNDP Khartoum explained:

We had many experiences where reports show tremendous achievements, especially during the implementation time and before the projects stop. For example the Area Action Scheme was one of our projects in North Kordofan State that was phased out in 2000 but now nothing is left. As usual all the project's assets were handed over to the government, who directed them to other businesses. In general, we always started our work by approaching the local leaders; who might be corrupt, selfish or seeking reputation and personal benefits, because we needed to start as fast as we could and make visible achievements. There was no place for conducting social studies or searching for those who were excluded or marginalised. The organisations always looked for more tangible results that would please the donors (DO-SSI, 07/2005/ *Khartoum*).



When alternative development approaches emerged and were employed three decades ago, development agencies succeeded in creating a reputation and a belief that they were concerned about development and attributed the failure of any development interventions to reasons, such as top-down approaches, and government's policies and corruption. This means that they absolved themselves from any responsibility (FAD-FGD, 07/2005/ Khartoum). Apparently, images about development agencies started to change. The research participants viewed development agencies as well as their staff as part of the problem (Chapters Seven). Development agencies need to change their norms, procedures, policies and attitudes in order to make a real change in people's lives. Development agencies, if they intend to be part of the development process, need to conduct an in-depth assessment of the internal social structures, select the right partners and build community's capacities.

Participation writers have agreed that limited community participation is not enough to ensure the sustainability of development efforts (Schneider, and Libercier, 1995b; Brohman, 1996; Rudqvist, A. and Woodford-Berger, 1996; Cleaver, 2004). They suggest that there is a need to focus on partnership, building networks, and dialogue among different stakeholders. These networks can offer knowledge, administrative support, political power and economic opportunities, and enhance the sustainability of local groups. Through these networks different groups can access opportunities to a wide range of power sharing within the development process: consultation; decision-making; management; and sharing of responsibilities and risks (Beaulieu and Manoukian, 1995:215). To guarantee the sustainability there are some measures, which need to be considered by development agencies from the beginning. These include availability of sound technical information, integration of communities' knowledge and experiences, and well-organised and capable local organisations and community ownership of choices (Schneider and Libercier, 1995b: 44).

The WNASP and the NKRDP adopted a planning-based approach, where activities were defined before their occurrence and indicators were established to collect data repeatedly using standardised formats. This meant that the rigid framework that included predetermined objectives, activities and inputs did not leave enough room for the projects' participants to make any significant changes (Davis, 1998; Mosse, 1998:8). In other words, the development agency and the concerned ministries had exercised a form of power when identifying the problems and interventions. According to ODA (1995) this condition would negatively

influence the project's effectiveness, because the primary stakeholders' interests were not considered and therefore they did not share ownership of the projects' interventions. Critics of participatory initiatives have highlighted its instrumental nature and focus on efficiency rather than empowerment and transformation (Cleaver, 2001; Gaventa, 2004; Hickey and Mohan, 2004:3; Mosse, 2001; Kothari, 2001). Therefore the new emerging theories on participation have focused on participation as a right and citizens are 'makers and shapers of development' (Gaventa, 2004:27).

This thesis supports the call for adopting a participatory monitoring and evaluation procedure, which is based on setting criteria and indicators in collaboration with the people concerned. This procedure may act as a learning process for all actors (Schneider and Libercier, 1995b:48). The project design should be flexible enough to accommodate any new data or insights that might emerge during the process of carrying out project activities (Uphoff, 1991; Lewis, 1998). Adopting a process approach, as outlined in Chapter Two, can help in monitoring and assessing ongoing changes. It can also allow for reviewing and adjusting the projects strategies and implementation plans. This means that development partners will be able to assess the extent and quality of interventions and hence decide whether to continue, adjust or terminate such interventions and activities. Adopting a process approach will potentially create more room for reviewing and adjusting the programme and develop a sense of ownership among local people. It may also create a sense of ease, especially for project staff who are under pressure and threat.

### ***Non-governmental Organisations***

There is an assumption that local groups and NGOs are able to respond quickly and mobilise more resources than government institutions (Brohman, 1996; Willis, 2005). Development theorists (Chambers, 1991; Rahnema, 1992; Brohman, 1996; Cleaver, 2001; Henkel et al, 2001; UNDP, 2002; Willis, 2005) placed emphasis on the importance of civil society groups and their role in providing services and advocacy. This understanding opened more space for local NGOs. In Sudan, it was observed that the national and regional NGOs had intensive presence and publicity. Their large numbers at both national and regional level and their relationships with international NGOs and other development agencies has become quite evident. On the other hand, especially after signing the peace process between the North and the South of Sudan, international NGOs and other development agencies have very much

relied on national NGOs to promote their policies, access information and/or provide services. It was assumed that these NGOs were more reliable than the government institutions (MAI-SSI, 11/2005/ *Khartoum*). Moreover, the involvement of local people in various forms of decentralised decision-making has become the focus of the neo-liberal approaches. According to Willis (2005:97) this involvement is associated with growth of NGOs. Willis (2005:98) argues that NGOs, whether international or national, are often regarded as a route for facilitating development for a range of reasons. Firstly, it is assumed that NGOs could provide services that are much more appropriate to the local community. Secondly, they relied on local knowledge and used local material; therefore they were able to provide such services more efficiently and effectively. Nevertheless, as explained in Chapter Five, research participants of different backgrounds agreed that the credibility of local NGOs (national and regional) is quite questionable. In contrast to the common perceptions in the literature research participants expressed their doubts and distrust for national NGOs. Their members have been accused of mobilising resources for themselves rather than the community. Participants at village level in both case studies were not aware of the roles and names of regional NGOs, which exceeded two hundred and fifty in North Kordofan State alone.

The NGOs in Sudan, especially those who deal with development, face critical challenges. They need to put their theoretical claim about development into practice. In order to do that this research suggests that they should develop a greater sense of commitment to communities and be accountable to those whom they claim to serve and hence improve their reputation. Likewise the research supports the need to build transparent structures and networks as recent evidence suggests that federation can improve the capacity of local organisations (Mitlin, 2004:176).

The present government policy has opened space for participation and free dialogue. Therefore, NGOs have opportunities to develop relationships, attract more resources, and contribute genuinely in promoting a nationwide participatory development process. The most important role that national and regional NGOs could potentially play is helping the grassroots organisations to emerge from their isolation, interact with each other and build allies with other international and state institutions. The Sudanese culture could be identified as a 'participatory culture', the values, beliefs and practices encourage cooperative and brotherhood / sisterhood acts. NGOs have the opportunity to utilise this culture in order to

motivate people to participate in development interventions, and raise their awareness about citizens' rights and obligations

### **Development Professionals' Attitudes and Behaviour**

In Sudan, development workers or staff, whose main role is to act as a catalyst, are usually hired by development agencies or seconded from the local government to support a project. They are either paid by or receive a supplement from a project. The North Kordofan case study demonstrated that there was tension and distrust between the senior staff whose main task was planning, training and supervision, and the field staff who were in contact with the day-to-day problems and frustrations of communities. Those front-line workers (Meethan, 1995) were under great pressure from all directions; from what they called the 'headquarters staff' (KFO-FGD, 10/2005), who pushed for more recorded achievements as well as from the frustrated communities, whose priorities and needs were not seriously addressed or met. This tension could be attributed to: firstly, the existence of different conditions of service, work facilities and work pressure; and secondly as well lack of communication, consultation and openness between the field staff and the management and supervisory officers at the state and localities levels. However, senior project staff are not the only ones to be blamed for this condition; in fact, development agencies may need some reorientation of their own staff practices, rules, incentives, and procedures in order to support participatory projects (Uphoff 1991).

This working environment questions the existence of a sense of unity as a value within the project staff. According to Evans (2003:3) unity 'is the degree to which members of an organisation are willing to tolerate the differences and variations among themselves, cooperate and work together'. In theory, participatory development requires open dialogue without fear. Moreover, it requires a shift in the behaviour of the project staff (Chambers, 1997). It is advocated that for participation to be an emancipator, conflicts and inequality among all actors and partners must be addressed openly and honestly, even if this means confrontation, a break down in communication and for a while, destruction of a cooperative atmosphere (Kelly, 2004:213). Through communication and commitment to participation the situation can change because various groups need to work together in harmony. Project management needs to open a space for training and exchange of information to upgrade the

skills of field staff. They also need to stimulate a respectful dialogue and open channels of communication with field staff as well as communities.

Another issue is the way that professionals gather information and share knowledge with communities. The NKRDP midterm evaluation mission (IFAD, 2004:3/4) and research participants revealed that different PRA techniques were used to investigate people's problems and priorities, but the outcomes were not used to design and implement plans. Meaning that participation was used to apparently legitimise what the projects can offer rather than allowing people to exercise their own decision-making power (Waddington and Mohan, 2004:220). It appeared from observations that the way the NKRDP staff 'used' the PRA methods might constrain the flow and analysis of information and the decision-making process. It could also lead people's thinking and reasoning. During discussion and debate, project professionals did not always remain neutral and act as facilitators. In fact, the interaction between the NKRDP's professionals and communities, while using PRA techniques, confirmed the concern about the spread of bad practice, which might be related to the superficial understanding of techniques, limited training and the inappropriate style adopted by some facilitators who 'generate and own knowledge' (Chambers, 1997:211; 1991:517). However, the way the local participants responded and reacted as discussed in Chapter Seven and Eight would suggest that PRA could offer opportunities for local communities to express themselves, analyse their problems and present solutions. Indeed, development providers who claim to adopt participation should realise that local communities are not a passive target of development interventions (Lozare, 1994); they have knowledge and accumulated experiences. This knowledge could provide some technical solutions that might be more relevant than external technology (Uphoff, 1991). Participatory methods could also be utilised as a tool to help local communities reflect on, and challenge, their perceptions, behaviours and experiences.

Also the project staff should know that they represent an external organisation whose role is to support the local organisations and equip them to lead the societal change (Beaulieu and Manoukian, 1995). Accordingly, staff of development organisations need to identify the shortcomings of the internal system of these organisations and face the realities that contribute to failure of some activities or limited outcomes. As presented in Chapter Eight, it could be understood that many of them might not be ready to face the consequences of criticising their own organisation's policy and risk their career or opportunities for working

for them. But it has to be known that development efforts require dedicated and sincere professionals who have great knowledge and experiences to offer to local people (Black, 1991) as well as the ability to amend and adjust the external knowledge in order to suit the local situations.

### **Addressing Power Relationships**

In Chapter Five it was explained that local power relations may influence the development plan and its outcomes. Apparently, the national and state governments, whether democratic or military, rely on traditional leaders and local elites to deliver services. A senior government official explained that:

‘The present government relies on traditional leaders to run the communities affairs. In fact, this is a dilemma because some leaders are good but the majority is not. Apparently, all regimes whether they are dictators or democratic could not sacrifice power for the sake of what so called society transformation or any other philosophical slogan, which was always claimed when started to rule’ (SG-SSI, 07/2005/ Khartoum).

However, it is proved that even democratic decentralisation simply opens space for the empowerment of local elites and not for the voices and interests of marginalised people (Gaventa, 2004:32). The point is that under a democratic system the rule of law and openness of the environment would offer a chance to show the hidden realities, a condition that could not be revealed under oppressive regimes.

The White Nile case study suggests that there is a need to acknowledge the influence of power in shaping development outcomes and impacts. It could be said that recording and analysing of any pattern of participation that is linked to success or failure of any activity, would help a project to identify the social identity of prominent actors, the attributes and dynamic of power, and influence in the village (Mosse, 2001). The existence of development projects could create different forms of conflict or competition between diverse communities or within homogenous groups. On the other hand, opening dialogue about power relationships might lead to confrontation if people express their views and perceptions openly; therefore many people try to avoid it, especially in rural communities. This condition needs to be handled carefully. Hickey and Mohan (2004) point out that participation cannot work as transformative if a project does not challenge existing power relationships and only

works around them to deliver more technically efficient services. To support participatory initiatives the projects need to have enough information about the social and geographical map of the area in order to be aware about the existing administrative and social units (Uphoff, 1991:494). Identifying power relationships should take place during the appraisal phase, which would help in paying attention to any conflicts or dealing with any negative outcomes that might emerge during the next phases.

The literature on participatory development focuses also on developing the organisational and management capacities of women. It was believed that building human capacities among women could not be achieved without direct involvement in decisions that affect them (Weekes-Vagliani, 1995:70-71). However, gender-based values in the White Nile Agricultural Services Project area, specifically within homogeneous communities, have affected the women's full involvement in the development process, their mobility, and limited chances of building their own capacities. This situation has been inherited for centuries. It has become apparent that within a homogeneous group (the White Nile case study), some practices became fixed norms and could not be challenged by insiders alone. This means that educated people, who usually initiate and lead changes within a society, may not be able to challenge the situation. Because there are always some groups or individuals whose own interests are dependent on maintaining the existing power structure (SAM-SSI, 07/2005). Those groups or individuals benefit from the internal blood or tribal relations that do not accept conflicts within the same group, and therefore often oppose the change, especially if proposed or led by insiders. In homogenous communities in the White Nile State even those who have knowledge and skills, whether male or female, would not be able to confront this situation alone. This thesis argues that this situation needs to be addressed and challenged by development agencies, regional and national NGOs, and government institutions rather than being approved or accepted.

Development projects, especially in areas where there are conflicts and tensions, could focus on opening space for dialogue and building of networks. This could be achieved through organisation of workshops at different levels, starting from grassroots levels to higher state level, bringing all concerned parties around a set of issues. The experience of the Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Resources and Irrigation in the White Nile State, focused on raising leaders' awareness about the value and meanings of protecting public assets, could be learned from (Chapter Six). Teaching and raising people's awareness of their rights and

responsibilities is an important element to readjust power relationships, improve government practices and enhance the outcomes of development efforts.

To put the role and function of participatory development into perspective and context there is a need to look at the historical perspective (Cooke, 2004:51). The main issue here is a need to learn from others' experiences. An in-depth analysis has to be conducted before making a decision about rejecting or replicating such ideas. Empirical analysis would help in identifying the potential problems, failures and successes that accompanied previous experiences.

Furthermore, in order to empower local communities in general and marginalised groups in particular, it becomes an essential precondition for many development efforts and interventions to support or encourage the formation of local organisations.

### **Formation of Community Organisations**

Organisations, such as associations or committees, are seen as important channels within the participatory development approaches (Brohman, 1996; Fernando, 1995; Rudqvist and Woodford-Berger, 1996; Blackburn and Holland, 1998:170). Both case studies, but particularly the NKRDP, showed that the formation of new organisations was placed at the centre of the project's interventions. The development agency, as a result of its unsuccessful efforts in attempting to strengthen the local grassroots organisations in the WNASP made some changes while interacting with local communities in North Kordofan State (NKRDP). One of those changes was the formation of a new organisation through democratic processes, in which the majority opinion wins, and under direct supervision of the project staff rather than leaving this task for communities. Through this 'democratic process', the NKRDP introduced a new way of selecting community representatives rather than following the local selection procedure. Meaning that 'numbers rather than wisdom prevail' (Lozare, 1995:238). Local communities usually select their representatives for voluntary grassroots organisations, in both case study sites, through consultation and negotiation. Through this process it was assumed that no one would be hurt or excluded. This also means that the communities avoid the perceptions of 'losers' and 'winners' in a decision (Burayidi, 2000:7). It was evident that these new procedures created divisions and tensions as those who were not selected felt



rejected and decided to stay away. This raises a concern about how development providers should deal with local systems.

The projects initiated the establishment of new Village Development Organisations in the NKRDP and cooperatives in the WNASP. These new organisations were to replace the traditional community-based organisations and to take over their responsibility. It was also expected that their members would be empowered through training and interaction with financial institutions. In reality, the projects have created new complicated structures that were neither understood by the members nor by ordinary people. Moreover, it was evident that it created tension, in some villages of North Kordofan State where there was more than one leader (*Sheikh*), while it maintained the exclusion of minority groups in the White Nile State. These organisations were not represented in the projects Board of Directors and did not attend the projects meetings. Practically the projects had adopted the top-down administrative structure, which did not offer opportunities to local organisations to participate in the decision-making process (Brohman, 1996). Meanwhile, it cannot be claimed that the members of these organisations were empowered to criticise or evaluate major decisions concerning project staff, objectives or finance. Research participants in the NKRDP expected that these structures would phase out with the project, similar to what had happened in the WNASP's, meaning that this will undermine participation as an end (Lane, 1995), if it is meant to be achieved.

Both projects succeeded in establishing different forms of committees, both men and women were registered in the same committees. However, it cannot be claimed that this situation is fully accepted by communities. In fact, neither women nor men believe that it is very important to be together in the same committee, but what matters is to see things improve and their lives change for the better. The Popular Development Works (PDW), a national NGO, as explained in Chapter Seven, has realised these realities. Accordingly, it decided to respect people's preferences and involved them through their existing local organisations.

The existence of these new structures neither replaced the old organisations nor empowered its members. Instead, it deprived the traditional organisations of the opportunity to be empowered. Traditional associations, such as education, native administration and *El-Goodeya* council continued to conduct their duties, while the new village development

organisations in the NKRDP only dealt with issues related to the project, such as credit, calling for meetings and welcoming missions and project staff. The newly invented organisations identified the poorest households as an unwanted group and deprived them of their basic right of voicing their opinions and being heard by others. As a result, they placed the project committees and activities away from their traditional institutions. This kind of demarcation between indigenous organisations and the 'project committees' created two parallel groups of organisations. One represents the community and the other one represents the project. In fact, the establishment of new organisations (cooperatives in the WNASP and Village Development Organisations in the NKRDP) was not based on dialogue, agreement and moral commitments. Instead it was an outcome of struggle and confrontation.

In communities like those in the White Nile State, a shift in power is a tough process for those who wish to empower themselves. It might also be more difficult for those who are asked to give up power. It needs courage and solidarity, therefore development providers may need to utilise any sign of collectiveness to initiate activities that might overcome the tension. In-depth investigation of existing grassroots **organisations**; their nature, capacity and representation could also offer better guidance for development decision-makers. Clearly, when information about who is involved, who is excluded and why, is available development facilitators would also be in a position to understand the internal power relations and how to deal with them. However, 'building up local organisations requires time and considerable personal and institutional commitments' (Blackburn and Holland, 1998:170), especially if local traditions stand as a barrier or affect the involvement of some groups or individuals.

## **Gender Issues**

Genuine participation involves equal and free debate, flow of information, joint moral responsibility and community representation. A critical question in this aspect: can people be engaged in an open, equal and free debate? Theoretically they can, but in practice some, for many reasons, cannot express their views or concerns. People may feel shy, not have confidence or feel inferior in front of powerful people and professionals. Another concern is that social traditions may hinder women from talking in public, even if they attend meetings and take a role in committees. Based on this concern there is a common assumption that women in developing countries are often disadvantaged in comparison to men. The literature

emphasises women's strategic interests, such as political representation, participation in decision-making processes and access to opportunities. There is a claim that these interests are ignored by mainstream development interventions (Cornwall, 2003). It is widely acknowledged that women's contributions to family livelihoods are most crucial in the poorest rural and urban communities (Weekes-Vagliani, 1995:65). Accordingly, special focus on gender issues is perceived to be very important when dealing with participatory development, especially within some sectors and areas of development, such as rural development and livelihood regeneration projects (Brohman, 1996; World Bank, 2001b).

In Sudan the Women in Development approach has focused on formulating separate components for women. The GCRT (2003:7/8) argues that this separate component has limited effect beyond those who are directly involved, moreover, it has a limited impact on the position of women. Despite these criticisms Osman (2002:25) supports strategies that consider setting up women specific programmes. The author argues that taking into account the context women-specific projects can help build women's capabilities, knowledge, skills and confidence. Strategies used by development organisations should be flexible to suit local context.

The study explored gender issues because both projects, taken as case studies, addressed the issue of women's involvement. It is important to acknowledge that the economic liberalisation and poor services in rural areas have a negative impact on the livelihoods of rural women. Women are left behind to manage the scarce resources and to deal directly with difficulties. Specifically, at grassroots level, gender sensitivity in the WNASP's and the NKRDP's design and approaches contributed to involvement of local women in various activities as well as in the new organisations. Through the NKRDP and the WNASP, the implementing agencies (government and IFAD) viewed the mixed organisation as a tool for involving women in some activities and a way for empowering them. This ideology was based on opening space for them to exercise some choices over conditions that affect them. This concept focused on involving women in decision-making processes at community level and accessing development opportunities. Osman (2002) points out that women in rural areas, in Sudan, perceived themselves as having less social and economic value, and are more or less powerless in comparison to men. However, findings from case studies contradict this view.

Designing special programmes for women in the WNASP and NKRDP and supporting the formation of joint organisations for both men and women have helped in creating better understanding of women's capabilities. In general, people own understanding about this issue was different than the projects. Research participants thought the existence of separate organisations did not create problems or deny the role or status of women. In North Kordofan, female participants have pointed at some women's groups and practices that men cannot be part of or attend, such as *Sandug*, coffee groups and women's *Nafir*. These groups have social and economic activities and contribute in different ways to support the school, poor families and social events. Male out-migration, created further hardships on all women in the case study area. Deterioration of the natural environment put more burdens on rural women who had to walk longer distances and spend more time and energy searching for fuel wood, fodder and collecting water. Due to these circumstances women focused on their daily needs and were satisfied with their own separate grassroots groups. It appears that the women's problem is not a lack of participation at household and community levels, and being equal to men, in this sense it is about poverty and access to means of development that ease suffering for both men and women. Therefore when development organisations force communities to adopt their measures it cannot be claimed that these forms of strategies will empower the participants. For example having women in the same organisations, in both case studies, opened space for them to attend mixed meetings but they mostly remained passive and showed little interests in being involved in mixed organisations.

Clearly, the development agency brought women to the projects through the WNASP and NKRDP. It cannot be claimed that this outcome will open a space for women within the existing organisations or contribute to transformation of the social relations of gender at the community level, because simply these are not of interest for local women. Based on these findings and understandings of this thesis it became clear that Western feminist frameworks would not work in many Third World contexts, 'because differences could not simply be absorbed into dominant frameworks' (Kirby, 1991:398 cited in Olesen, 1994:160). Based on this argument, Olesen (1994) points out women's views and actions are based on justifications and reasons that make sense in their own life.

Koopman (1997:141) in her analysis of the roots of the African food problems concludes that resources made available by state and donors to households subject to male control rarely enabled women to access inputs to improve their farms' productivity. In fact, the division of

labour is different in rural communities in Sudan. Men and women work together on farming operations, such as planting, weeding and harvesting. Women might also engage in trade. Similar to many other traditional African societies in Sudan women's work was valued and viewed in a non-competitive division of labour (Snyder and Tadesse, 1997:76). However, in Sudan women took no economic responsibility. According to traditions and beliefs, men should provide the family with all financial needs; nevertheless, women are also committed to their families and concerned about improving living standards. Therefore when development projects employed Women in Development (WID) or Gender and Development (GAD), women's responses and interactions were influenced by their concerns and interests rather than what kind of approaches were employed. For example, community priorities are usually household and community oriented. In both case studies the shortage of water always creates suffering and stress for women and girls, but when the research participants, men and women, identified their problems, shortage of water was identified as a main concern. Another example, the collection of fuel wood is always a woman's responsibility but when the use of gas emerged as an alternative source of energy and became available in the cities most men in the NKRDP preferred to use their loan for paying for gas stoves rather than investing in other activities (Chapter Eight).

The White Nile community is one of many communities in Sudan that have strict gendered codes of behaviour (Osman, 2002:24). Accordingly, any organisation trying to challenge these cultural norms will face resistance and may create conflict or complete rejection of its interventions as explained in Chapter Eight. Therefore there is a need for an in-depth understanding of these social norms and development of flexible strategies that suit the local context. Development planners need to have clear ideas about women's identities, interests, resources and capabilities and constraints that they might face in order to create effective development initiatives (Brohman 1996; Cornwall, 2003). Women's programmes, especially the externally designed ones, might face resistance even from women themselves who are influenced by cultural norms and economic conditions. Therefore, there is a need for a practical framework that adopts suitable features of both approaches, Women in Development (WID), and Gender and Development (GAD) in an integrated way. This framework could be based on women's needs and priorities. It should also consider the internal social changes that are associated with development stages and level of awareness of both men and women (GCRT, 2003:10).

## **Indigenous Values, Structures and Practices**

The Sudanese community by its nature is an open and trusting society despite the authoritative, bureaucratic official system (Abdel-Atti, 2004). Sudanese culture emphasises knowledge and practices based on values, which are reflected through seeing and feeling. According to Burayidi (2000:7) this is in contrast to the European cultures, which prefer knowledge and information gained through cognitive means, such as counting and measuring. This research supports Burayidi's suggestion that differences in cultures require development planners to demonstrate their sensitivity to various views and adopt fair and impartial planning.

As explained in Chapter Seven, in the NKRDP case study, people live in small communities and bond to each other through different relationships. Their values prohibit them from abandoning each other, especially when face with hardships. Therefore there is a great deal about community collective acts, cooperation and solidarity in their spoken language. Poem and songs praise those who steadfastly conformed to their values and lampooning those who failed to live up to these values (Shahi, 1981) and in record information about events and people's efforts. This emerged when the PRA history-profile technique was used in this research. The research participants presented the native poem that told us about the changes that took place during the last century and how people handled them. Apparently, the local values have constructed people's relationships, which contradict the individualist bias of neo-classical economics (Friedmann, 1992:47). According to Folbre (2002) the tendency in development theory and practice is to privilege market relations. This conception is due to the fact that non-market work is considered a moral responsibility rather than a calculated exchange (Folbre, 2002:66). Apparently, this would not reflect the real situation and ignore the role and impact of non-market values.

In North Kordofan, in contrast to the White Nile, social organisation and value systems did not accept domination and individualism. Those who were well off or who had status had more obligations and responsibilities towards the community. Leadership was about respect and trust. Local people work together to implement community projects, help the poor or those who serve the community. Participating in community affairs whether socially or economically has been perceived within a moral framework that is guided by rights,

responsibilities and obligations. Relationships within families and communities in the villages depend on compromising and reconciliation. People usually try to avoid confrontation, or criticising each other in public, instead they negotiate and offer protection for each other, especially for women. Therefore, the local communities in North Kordofan, through village-contributory systems, have overcome difficulties that were created by the project mechanisms. In some villages, rich and wealthy people have donated to ensure the involvement of the poor families in 'the project's committees'. Those who participate in community development programmes never cared what they would gain in return; in fact, they made other people's interests their own. This work was not directly paid for and therefore difficult to put a quantitative value on (Folbre, 2001:66). According to Friedmann (1992:46) this kind of contribution is a product of non-market relations, which cannot find a place within the mainstream policy but can fit within the alternative development framework.

In contrast to the NKRDP in the WNASP areas due to the existence of irrigated schemes, there are semi-formal organisations, such as farmers' unions and the Production Councils, which have resources and links with state and financial institutions. However, evidence showed that these semi-formal organisations were not trusted and were not effective. Therefore people were dependant on voluntary non-formal groups to run their affairs. People in the NKRDP and the WNASP sites formed these grassroots associations, which were service-oriented, some were managed by men. It provides services to the community through managing education and religious affairs. Women, on the other hand, were involved in participatory saving funds and social groups. These grassroots associations (GROs) or groups were much more localised and worked on their own. Mostly, they did not have any links with the regional and national civil organisations or any relationship with government institutions. Research participants attributed that to unresponsive government institutions and lack of educated and influential community members, who could support them and facilitate contacts and provision of services. The formation of these GROs and their efforts to mobilise people, inspire actions, and make changes, indicated that people were able to see things as they really were and do something about it (Freire, 1972). However, their capabilities were reduced by several limitations, such as inadequacy of resources, and access to assets and rights (Clever, 2001).

Both case studies showed that people in the projects' sites had a diversity of knowledge about climate, soil, varieties and uses of various vegetation as well as animals' behaviour, diseases,

and breeding. People actually depend on that knowledge for dealing with their environments. Local communities in the WNASP and NKRDP sites have significant knowledge of their problems, priorities and solutions.

In both case studies local people used a highly complex strategy to survive in a harsh fluctuating environment, where the dry season lasts for eight to nine months. Local people developed their own techniques and methods to deal with the natural and social environment. They adopted traditional techniques for storage and food processing as well as social practices. Development theorists have challenged the externally imposed knowledge and emphasised the exploration and utilisation of local knowledge (Uphoff, 1991; Chambers, 1997; Sillitoe, 2002; van Vlaenderen, 2004). Indeed, any proposed changes in these settings needed to be studied and analysed carefully with local communities, as some responses from research participants had shown that some interventions were introduced without consulting local people. The unpleasant experiences with rehabilitation of bridges and introduction of new animal breeds in the WNASP, and the NKRDP staff lack of knowledge of the locals' farming calendar raise concerns about some issues, such as pilot studies and local knowledge. It is believed that innovative development is dependent on a trial and error principle, which is based on combining local experiences, ideas and techniques with outside sources (Sillitoe, 2000). The stimulation of local experimentation has found to be useful in exploring indigenous knowledge, strengthening the people's confidence in their own solutions and producing appropriate options that coincide with ecological, economic and socio-cultural conditions and circumstances (Hagmann et al., 1998:48-51). Moreover, the key issue is involving people in decision-making processes as well as keeping them informed about changes.

Scheyvens (1999:63) explains that traditional knowledge can contribute to sustainable development; communities can draw on what is useful from their previous experiences and incorporate it with what could be of value from the present. This research supports Edwards's (1993:79) suggestion that development professionals and experts need to appreciate the value of indigenous knowledge and practice in showing what is relevant and what is not. Otherwise professionals and experts might make disastrous mistakes and hence local people will lose faith in development providers and their staff. Accordingly, development agencies do not need to worry about the sustainability of their interventions. Instead, they need to trust the



local communities' knowledge and experiences and negotiate, rather than enforce, their interventions.

The ultimate goal of participation is to empower people. Therefore in order to enhance people's participation the concepts of empowerment and participatory citizenship are useful in constructing such a framework. For enhancing the outcomes of participatory development interventions this thesis suggests that there is a need to adopt a moral commitment approach, through which a fair and productive relationship will be established between ordinary people and various development providers.

### **Adopting a Moral Commitment Approach**

This research shows evidence on how the participatory values protected and sustained the lives of people in a harsh environment and offered support for those who were powerless and poor. It showed how the rich and powerful in North Kordofan had rejected the regulations and rules that enforced discrimination and exclusion of the poor. It also demonstrated how those who moved from their poor homeland, to live abroad or in the cities, did not cut-off their relationships with relatives, neighbours or the rest of the community, instead, they continued to offer different forms of support. This suggests that some kind of sharing and care for others cannot be bought and sold but can be strengthened (Folbre, 2001:xx), and the moral components of development can be central to its strengthening (Folbre, 2002:66). Chambers, in his ideas for development (2004b), encourages the adoption of an obligation-based approach in order to balance the rights-based approach. Chambers focuses on the rich and powerful individuals who should commit themselves to those who are poor and powerless. Adding to Chambers' ideas, and based on this research's findings, this thesis suggests a moral commitment approach, as one of the ways to improve the practice of development, especially at grassroots levels in Sudan.

This approach requires, in addition to the need for powerful individuals, a commitment from all development actors: government institutions, donors, development agencies and local NGOs. If the agency has solid based values that foster participation and local control of activities, then accountability mechanisms may be put in place to reflect these values (Kilby, 2006:955). The exclusion of the powerless cannot be challenged unless the moral

commitments and responsiveness are developed and flourish among politicians, bureaucrats, and traditional and NGOs leaders at different levels.

Development agencies need to have a clear vision and strong belief in participatory concepts. Many authors and theorists (Fernando, 1995; Karl, 2000; Brohman, 1996; Cooke, 2001; Kothari, 2001; Gaventa, 2004) affirm that participation should be at the centre of development efforts, through adjusting of conventional approaches and methodologies, establishing new relationships among the stakeholders, and viewing people as partners and actors of their own development. To have a workable participatory approach that empowers local communities, there are some requirements that need to be considered, especially by donors. For example, international development agencies must recognise the need for grassroots organisations and support them to manage their own development. This requires building their capacity and providing them with resources or facilitating the flow of resources. They also need to view development as an ongoing process rather than as discrete projects, which are designed and managed by outsiders (Lane, 1995). Moreover, if development organisations are in favour of participatory ideology they need to change their way of thinking and operation, however, before that they must educate their donors about the situation and how things can be changed and evaluated.

The thinking and behaviours of development professionals are one of the challenges that face the participatory development practices. Within development agencies, those who are concerned about development should step out of their silence and make real changes in the policies and strategies of their organisations. When we talk about development organisation systems, we actually talk about people who are in charge of these organisations and who implicitly are credited or blamed for these organisations' credibility and achievements. The staff and designers of policies within these organisations need to have real commitment towards the poor. Cooke (2004:43) suggests they may need to make difficult choices. The author asserts that having morals would create what is called 'principled change agents'. If development projects are to succeed, some changes in staff behaviour are needed and their technical capacities should be improved. Changing behaviours include transparency, openness and dialogue that create mutual respect and encourage teamwork. There is also a need for the development of new technical skills, with regard to local environments. In fact, technically equipped, transparent, well-motivated and committed project staff can contribute to making real organisational changes.

Project approaches should be employed with an open mind. It is important to understand, to negotiate and to be flexible. External development providers should question whether it is appropriate to introduce and modify the existing local organisations or not. It could be more genuine to support the indigenous system if it represents the diverse interests and is accepted by various groups. Accordingly, the main role a development agency could play is building the capacity of local and grassroots organisations rather than focusing only on materialistic and qualitative achievements (Uphoff, 1991: 494). It would also be more valuable if development agencies motivate those who are classified as rich, elites, or powerful, to interact and support their own communities, especially if this has already been the practice within specific settings. Moreover, joint management and decision-making would increase the sense of ownership, build local capacity and facilitate the process of a project's withdrawal and taking over process.

Development agencies need to adopt new criteria for judging the impact of their interventions. However, involving large numbers of people in each activity would not indicate that development initiatives have achieved an economic self-reliant community or empowered local institutions that represent diverse interests. Development interventions need to be understood and practiced as an empowering process rather than just activities that create some visible outputs. This means that by developing new understanding and a new functioning framework, theory can be brought into practice.

## **Conclusion**

This chapter examined the main themes, which were identified in this research, and offered a set of suggestions to improve the practice of participatory development. It has been demonstrated that the implementing agencies' policies and their professionals' behaviours and technical capabilities have influenced the nature and outcomes of the projects' interventions and hence the extent and quality of people's participation. The WNASP's and the NKRDP's intention to see their participant communities become self-reliant was undeniable but not much was done to make that a reality, as the participatory procedures succeeded in bringing large numbers of local people nearer to the project staff of both projects, who made decisions, but without involving them (Nelson and Wright, 1995). Both projects have failed to involve local communities in planning, monitoring, and evaluation

processes. Moreover, the decision of creating new local organisations did not mean that exclusion or subordination was overcome, because the factors that created these conditions, in some communities, were not resolved (Clever, 2001).

The projects' strategies use participation as 'a means' rather than 'an end'. As revealed through these case studies, people's participation in both case studies' sites is basically of a low level. It has been found that primary stakeholders were not involved in the decision making process, monitoring and evaluation. The government and international agency have shaped the development processes and hence determined the socio-economic features of the societies.

Evidence from various participants showed clearly that people have diverse levels of knowledge and know how to manage their environment. Moreover, the Sudanese culture encourages many participatory initiatives and praises those who sincerely initiate and support actions that benefit the community. Despite the high level of poverty and limited resources, villages' development showed that most of the local services in both case studies were the products of local communities' inputs.

In general the extent and quality of people's participation in development projects in Sudan is influenced by development providers' policies, strategies and credibility as well as people's culture and capacity. In relation to development providers, the following factors have affected the level of people's participation: enforcing external agendas and approaches; failure to pay attention to representation and building communities' capacities; and professionals' behaviour and technical capabilities. Regarding communities, the following factors have reduced people's engagement in development interventions: severe poverty and lack of knowledge when dealing with microfinance institutions; people's previous experiences with government and aid agencies; type and amount of assistance or resources offered to a community; exclusion from planning, monitoring and evaluation processes; level of education and organisation; and local traditions and national NGOs' credibility and commitments.

To reverse the situation and enhance the outcomes of people's participation in development interventions this research suggests that development policies should support people's

capabilities and open ways to support individuals and groups who have no control or access to factors of production. Moreover, to understand the communities' abilities to make changes and to achieve development there is a need to identify the potential and limits to these changes in relations to representation, power, resources and skills. Specifically, development agencies need to make a shift in their policies. To achieve this, a lot of time and effort as well as commitment are required to build locals' capacities and create accountable and transparent mechanisms that ensure inclusion and equity.

With reference to the new concept of participation, which was linked to rights of citizenship and democratic governance, and which was based on research participants' views and perceptions, it could be argued that one of the main challenges for the Sudan is to build accountable government institutions. Additionally sharing knowledge between local communities and development professionals could create a foundation for development and adoption of new technologies and practices, as well as trust and understanding between the two parties. The case studies suggested that designing participatory development projects requires a comprehensive knowledge of local settings and negotiations with those whom development is targeting. It has also been argued that if the poor and powerless are not given a chance to be part of a decision making process they would not be able to access resources and information and influence decisions in their favour. Both projects with their new ideology and new approaches, despite their shortcomings and outcomes, had created new knowledge. They changed the old concepts about external assistance and introduced new meanings and terms.

In this chapter I suggested a moral commitment approach that could bring various development actors through a values based contract to serve those whom development interventions are addressing. This approach is based on basic principles, which are morals and values upon which all those who have power, resources and skills, should develop a sense of obligation to those who have none or few. In other words: everyone within the development's sphere is expected to interact and take a positive stand.

## Chapter Ten: Conclusion

### Summary of Thesis

This research employed a case study strategy to explore and analyse people's experiences while participating in the White Nile Agricultural Services Project (WNASP) and North Korfofan Rural Development Project (NKRDP). The study has explored the nature and potential of the projects interventions and identified the factors that influenced the outcomes of people's participation in development programmes in the Sudan. The selection of two case studies in two different locations in Sudan provided the conditions for examining participation in development in real settings. Both development projects were implemented by IFAD and the Government of Sudan at different times and adopted a self-help approach. They focused on strengthening grassroots organisations, microfinance and women's involvement. People in both case studies formed their own ideas, motivations and methods of participation.

This thesis aims to contribute a better understanding of participatory development processes within development theory and has employed various sources in order to answer the following research question:

*How can the outcomes of participatory development projects in Sudan be enhanced?*

Chapter One explained that there is little information to show the nature of interaction between various development actors and the impact and applicability of participatory approaches within the socio-cultural contexts. There is insufficient understanding of how to involve communities in designing a project or building effective and representative organisations and the best ways to improve development practices. This chapter also provided a brief introduction about of the study, focusing on the study and the importance of this research project. It stated the research question and outlined the methods that were used to explore the topic. The chapter provided a description of the organisation and the focus of each chapter.

Chapters Two and Three provided a theoretical framework for examining the experiences of two participatory development projects in Sudan. Chapter Two traced the history of participation in relation to development. It discussed the debate around participation within development theory and its emergence as a prominent feature within the alternative development approach. It emphasised the importance of participation as an approach to development as well as utilising indigenous knowledge when implementing development programmes in the Third World. It has also shown how the meaning of participation has evolved over time, how its outcomes are viewed through different perspectives, and introduced the meanings and features of development projects. It concluded by presenting the recent theories on participation that focus on building relationships between local people and development and service providers.

Chapter Three explored and examined the issues that surround the concept of participation in practice. There are assumptions that arrangements in practice might be different from what is described in a projects literature, therefore this chapter examined the role and impact of development providers, professionals and local community organisations. It highlighted the stages of women's involvement in development along with the influence of local cultures. Some participatory development experiences are reviewed. This chapter referred to limitations of empirical studies and literature on people's participation in development projects in Sudan as well as on indigenous participatory development values, structures and practices in different contexts.

Chapter Four on methodology described my personal experiences in the field while interacting with the research participants. It showed how various participatory methods, especially focus group discussions that followed the PRA sessions, brought people together and allowed them to present their views and values while interpreting their personal choices and decisions. It highlighted the ethical considerations that were taken into account throughout the research process.

Chapter Five introduced Sudan's development journey and examined how the political changes that have taken place since its independence in 1956 have influenced the development efforts. The roles, nature and potential of non-governmental organisations were discussed. This chapter provided a framework through which development interventions at grassroots level could be examined.

The subject of Chapter Six, the White Nile Agricultural Services Project (WNASP), was the secondary case study. It was implemented from 1996-2001. The participatory approaches and mechanisms that were employed by the WNASP to attract the local communities and involve them in the project were explored. Primary stakeholders were the main participants in this case study. Through their contribution, various factors that influenced the outcomes of the WNASP interventions and development processes in their villages were identified. The issue of sustainability, which is identified in the literature as one of the purposes of employing participatory approaches, is also examined. This case study provided further understanding on the role of local power.

Chapters Seven and Eight reported on the major case study, the North Kordofan Rural Development Project (NKRDP). Chapter Seven introduced the NKRDP and local communities in the North Kordofan state. It explored the nature of relationships between the field workers and the senior staff. It examined, in depth, the participative norms and organisations which North Kordofan's people used to create changes in their lives. Despite the negative images regarding government authorities, Chapter Seven demonstrated that in North Kordofan state there was a new shift in the thinking of government professionals, which resulted in initiating new participative structures at various administrative levels. These structures allowed room for participation and collaboration between development providers, facilitators and local communities, forming a basis on which to address the participatory development challenges in North Kordofan State and offering examples to other areas inside Sudan.

Chapter Eight examined the North Kordofan Rural Development Project approaches and mechanisms and how local communities interacted and perceived its interventions. It explored the nature of interactions between the project and other parties such as government and financial institutions and non-governmental organisations. It highlighted the project responses and its staff's way of thinking while dealing with the only national NGO that worked in the area. It demonstrated that the project interventions were determined before consultation with the people and how projects mechanisms and strategies had constrained the participation of the poorest categories.



Chapter Nine discussed the major themes that emerged from this research and related them to participatory development theories. The main themes that were identified were: development providers' policies and credibility; professionals' behaviours; power relations; formation of community organisations; and gender issues and local cultures. These themes helped in understanding the nature and potential of development interventions and approaches, and factors that influenced people's participation. In this chapter the thesis suggested some ways to improve the practice of participatory development interventions.

Having provided a brief summary of each chapter the following section summarises the research findings. In this respect I do not claim that these findings are universally relevant, but may be applicable to other Sudanese socio-cultural settings and help in understanding or investigating similar aspects in other contexts.

## **Research Findings**

The two case studies provided further evidence, which supported a wide range of research findings on participatory development. This research supports the literature highlighting the shortcomings of participatory initiatives and points out its instrumental nature and focus on efficiency rather than empowerment and transformation (Cleaver, 2001; Mosse, 2001; Kothari, 2001; Gaventa, 2004; Hickey and Mohan, 2004). It also supports and strengthens some of the claims made in the literature that emphasise the importance of socio-cultural factors when planning participatory development projects (Korten, 1991; Kottack, 1991; Tombo, 2003). The findings of this study offer further understanding on how development providers and local communities interact and highlight the nature and potential of indigenous participative systems. This thesis raises further concerns regarding all development providers' (state, development agencies and national NGOs) policies and credibility.

The study demonstrates that, in Sudan, since the independence there has been a succession of weak and ineffective governments that ranged between elected democratic and military regimes. These governments have failed to create political stability or achieve balanced development in a country which is characterised by vast cultural and religious differences. As a result, internal conflicts emerged in various parts of the country and between different groups. To achieve development there is a need to achieve unity among all the Sudanese. However, the ethnic diversity, conflicts and political differences among dominant parties and wide spread poverty are obvious challenges. In order to create a unified harmonious,

cooperative society in Sudan, an in depth understanding and sincere intention from all concerned parties as well as the international community to handle these challenges is required. In this regard, the government needs to establish and implement cultural and political policies that encourage citizens, regardless of their race or religion, to live together and cooperate. Peoples' identities, tribes and practices should be respected by others. Therefore recognising and accepting cultural diversity by government as well as political and social groups is a basic principle for adopting balanced development plans and promoting the concepts of unity and social cohesiveness. Respect for people's identities and cultures are thus, a fundamental precondition for meaningful participatory development.

This study shows that development assistance was unevenly distributed between villages and individuals. Communities who have influential and powerful members received considerably more help and responsiveness from the government and development projects while others who were neediest received less. This trend resulted in a lack of trust in development providers' credibility and transparency.

Despite the projects' claims of adopting a non-exclusionary approach, this study revealed that the opportunities were offered by formal financing institutions (banks), were accessed by dominant people. Most of the formal credit programmes (*village Sanduq*) offered opportunities, which benefited the rich and middle class households, while the poorest in both project sites were excluded. It has been revealed that there are shortcomings, which are mainly related to restrictions adopted by the projects and banks, such as membership fees, compulsory installment and rigid repayment schedules. In conclusion, severe poverty and lack of knowledge in dealing with microfinance institutions reduce people's involvement in self-reliance programmes that are adopted by development providers through their 'self-help approach'. The critical point is the ability of microfinance institutions to reach the poor people and make a change in their lives that is sustainable (Otero, 2005). In order to achieve sustainable change in Sudan, there is a need to develop the managerial and technical capacities within the grassroots organisations and understand the reality of the poor communities.

Similar to other research findings (Uphoff, 1991: 494; Tembo, 2003) this study illustrated that people's interaction and participation in development projects is influenced by their previous experiences with government and aid agencies. As a result of those experiences

people constructed their own views regarding development organisations' and government institutions' credibility and impact on their lives.

The North Kordofan case study provided evidence that the project, as resource provider, had power over local communities. People started to ask for what might conform to project framework rather than what they required. This confirms that 'local need' might be shaped by local perceptions of what development agencies could legitimately and realistically be expected to deliver (Cooke and Kothari, 1995:80; Mosse, 2001:20).

In North Kordofan men tend to return from the cities during the rainy season. This suggests that farming activities are economically more viable than jobs in urban centers. Those returning revealed that lack of resources and the type of the project's (NKRDP) interventions have forced them to seek employment elsewhere. They talked about the need for development policies and inputs that support infrastructures and agro-industrial enterprises that are based on local products and intermediate technologies. The amounts of resources that are directly allocated for improving the living standards of rural communities in both case studies have failed to create that change.

Material interest is a very powerful factor in determining what development staff and local communities' responses are and how they interact. Meeting community needs and addressing people's priorities has found to be a significant factor in attracting people's participation. This finding supports Fernando, 1995; Narayan, 1995; Tembo, 2003. It illustrated that the extent and quality of people's participation in project activities increase when their needs are satisfied. As argued by Edwards (1993:86) people showed willingness to cooperate if they were given the resources, information and opportunities to do so. This meant that the acceptance of participating in projects activities as well as having projects' field staff in the villages would be influenced by the types of benefits or services that were provided by development or aid agencies (Mosse, 2001). Accordingly, the type and amount of assistance or resources offered to a community would influence and determine the level and quality of its members' participation in regard to decisions. When local communities, in some villages (NKRDP) were given the resources, information and opportunities to make decisions, they showed willingness to cooperate and help each other.

Formulation and conducting of monitoring and evaluation by project staff and outsiders reflected the policies and visions of development agencies rather than the local people. Sometimes it contradicted people's values and visions and thus reduced their commitment to the project. This outcome supported the World Bank's findings, which confirmed that people could not make a commitment to a project or even fulfill their commitment if they are not a part of its foundation (World Bank, 1996:8). However, limited evidences from the NKRDP demonstrated that people developed innovative ways to involve those who had been excluded and adopted new technologies and ways to improve their living standard.

The White Nile case study showed that sustainability of such interventions would not be assured if local people were not free and skilled enough to take over the responsibility of development. It also illustrated that participatory development in this project had been a technical approach to development not engaging in issues of power. This thesis supports many suggestions that ensure the sustainability of implemented activities. There are some measures that should be considered by development projects. These include integration of local knowledge and experiences, supporting local organisations, ensuring community ownership of choices (Schneider and Libercier, 1995a: 13) and paying attention to economic organisations and the role of education (Bordenave, 1994).

The roles of national and regional NGOs were also explored. Despite the donor trust and spaces that opened for those NGOs, this study showed that most of the national NGOs that exist at national or state level had leaders and members that failed to prove they were committed to local people's affairs. Most of the national NGOs engaged in political conflicts and lack coordination capacities and good reputations among communities. However, finding proved that freedom of association alone cannot be a guarantee for acquiring accountable and efficient community organisations. NGOs' leaders' credibility and commitment are also important. Grassroots organisations may lack a capacity to create changes that communities seek. Despite this reality most of the voluntary grassroots associations in North Kordofan and the White Nile have proven to have a good representation of people's realities and are more capable of mobilising the local communities. This thesis suggests that international organisations with genuine intentions to reach the impoverished communities need to be aware of local partners and must investigate and research how genuine democratic and accountable non-governmental organisations are promoting participatory approaches.

By exploring the professionals' behaviour and technical capabilities this thesis has aimed to identify the capacity of those development actors to influence the participatory development process. In this regard the NKRDP case study revealed that there is tension and conflict between two groups of professionals; the seniors and the field staff. The field staff in NKRDP do not share the senior staff's views regarding the meaning of participation and the way to interact with the only national NGO (Popular Development Works) in the project site. There is also no channel for them to address the development organisation and the project management about their concerns and problems. These findings suggest that either the conflicts between these groups be resolved or one group may abandon the project (Tembo, 2003:45), probably the fieldworkers. Double standard criteria when dealing with professionals and accumulation of benefits for certain groups could encourage the development of client-patron relationships between development organisations and staff (Cooke, 2004:50).

The NKRDP case study demonstrated that when project staff are under pressure, have limited time and a long list of proposed activities to implement, their main concern is in making visible achievements. Development organisations could be seen as an instrument and opportunity to gain assistance. The threat of sanctions and withdrawal of assistance have influenced the behaviours of project staff and communities. This supports the literature, which suggested that due to development providers' policies, some groups might view the development organisation as an instrument and opportunity to achieve personal objectives. As a consequence they behave as weak and dependant partners subject to sanctions and withdrawal of capital under some conditions (Uphoff, 1991:499; Taylor, 2001:124). In relation to project staff, both case study findings raise concern in regard to professional technical capabilities, and willingness to embrace and share knowledge with local communities.

The use of PRA methods by NKRDP staff did not mean that people's needs, priorities and perceptions were considered. PRA sessions for the projects were clearly a method for collecting information and bringing people to the staff, who would then convince them to adopt their own approaches and take part in various activities. The way the NKRDP staff facilitated the PRA methods was simply a matter of social-psychological technique (Cooke, 2004:45), meaning that the techniques, which supposedly created consciousness and emancipation (Freire, 1972), were reduced to tools that brought people to the project.

In comparison during my research, the research participants, through a historical profile of their villages and focus group discussions, were able to identify different crises that had influenced their lives. They also identified different measures and actions that they had undertaken to improve the situation. This indicated that communities were not passive and did not require external motivators to act.

In regard to community organisations, this thesis has highlighted how participatory development theorists and organisations are increasingly emphasising the importance of supporting community organisations to deal with development affairs (Chambers, 1991:533; Uphoff, 1991; ODA, 1995; Weekes-Vagliani, 1995:67; Warren, 1998:122; Kabeer, 2003). In this regard this research showed that the projects' strategies focused on establishing new organisations as part of their interventions. They encouraged and supported the selection of members of new committees through nomination and election, or so called 'democratic processes', which introduced unfamiliar practice and created unpleasant feelings among some groups. As a consequence this effort has resulted in creating community structures similar to the arrangements of bureaucratic structures (Cleaver, 2001:42), with complicated features and terms of reference that are hard to understand and/or unknown by its members.

The study demonstrated that the formation of new organisations by the WNASP had accumulated more power for those that were already powerful, while in North Kordofan State it disturbed a well-established consultative and participative system, and excluded the poorest. Therefore local people constructed a separate identity for external interventions. They placed the projects committees and activities in isolation from their own. This kind of separation created a new identity in the name of the projects. Similarly to Mosse's (1995:144) findings the project staff lay a claim to the creation of new local organisations, when in reality they recombined existing roles, relationships of power and social status.

Local people do not feel in control of the projects as these new organisations do not invite the involvement of all people and those involved do not develop skills or build relationships with outsiders. The formation of new development organisations had represented the 'beneficiaries' in a problematic way (Kothari, 2001). These new structures gave voice to some groups and individuals, especially women, but no genuine agency, as their power over development inputs and outcomes is very limited or non-existent.

By exploring the influence of power this thesis's findings support the UNOPS's (2001:21) findings that power relations can negatively affect the extent and quality of people's participation in development interventions. The findings from the White Nile case study suggest that the degree to which members of the community and local committees trust each other, especially their leaders, is a crucial factor in achieving effective local organisations. Leaders need to gain respect and trust or the entire social fabric may disintegrate. Both case studies suggest that establishing new organisations by development agencies as a mechanism to encourage or ensure people's participation should not be a routine. It must be carefully investigated before making a decision between formation of new organisations or supporting existing ones.

In highly multiethnic communities, such as the White Nile societies where minority groups may be excluded, special attention should be given to representation and building capacities of newly formed organisations. This requires effort and input which most development agencies are not willing to offer as long as their main focus is making rapid and quantitative achievements. This study finds that the existence of conflicts and unbalanced power relations in the WNASP sites have constrained community solidarity and influenced their commitment and willingness to participate in community initiatives.

In comparison, voluntary grassroots organisations which were established by local people are found to be more representative, trusted and sustainable than those created by development agencies. This thesis suggests that the decisions regarding formation of new organisations require a comprehensive knowledge of: communities' needs; social structures; and traditions and power relations; or these decisions may lead to tension and conflict, and may create or maintain the exclusion of some groups and individuals. In general the outcome of this effort (formation of new organisations) indicates that development planners, even as citizens of that culture (national staff), may be influenced and guided by external systems, which may not be suited to the communities. It can be suggested that development planners should acquire knowledge regarding the values, meanings and impact of local systems and support what is fair and acceptable to the people involved.

The gender dimension of development activities gains much attention and focus from the development agency at least in a theoretical form. In practice the number of women involved

in most activities, in both projects, was higher than that of men, which definitely served the instrumental goal. The projects' staff intention to empower women and create space for them within the society is undeniable. However, this intention was constructed around the projects' visions rather than those of the people. Women's participation in the new mixed committees and their activities were enforced by the projects and encouraged by the presence of female staff and village leaders. Women were encouraged to participate in order to get the projects' assistance. The existence of separate male and female organisations does not embody any form of discrimination or exclusion for women. The research participants, both men and women, perceived it as a part of the social system that has functioned and been a way of life for generations. It is about division of responsibilities and concerns. Women participating in the new mixed committees showed little interest in maintaining their presence in these organisations. This demonstrated how cultural ideology could influence and determine gender relations at the community level. This thesis supports Baum's (2000) suggestions that: primarily, development planners should help the community members to re-examine their cultures, identify shortcomings and accept changes; secondly they must be aware that their own values might be in conflict with the local communities' values. Apparently, the development agency and the gender specialists need to take into account the historical context of development as well as the social and cultural contexts of women's lives.

Enforcing development providers' agendas and strategies has failed to achieve the intended transformation outcomes. People tend to adhere to the projects' visions rather than their own, meaning there is little evidence that this strategy (enforcing the formation of mixed committees) has promoted the development agency's goal of the communities' empowerment. Despite this, gender sensitivity in the WNASP and the NKRDP design, which resulted in introducing special programmes for women and supporting joint organisations for both men and women, created new meanings. Women's participation in the mixed committees in the NKRDP has created new insights and helped in creating appreciation of women's knowledge, however this did not change men's perceptions about gender roles and rights, especially at household level.

Those communities that had a high level of education and organisation achieved some forms of development in their villages without external assistance. They had better schools and health services and different criteria for measurement of poverty were recorded. People constructed their own view regarding the role and importance of education. In Sudan,



education has a great influence on women's participation in economic activities and decision making processes at household, community and national levels. Education is seen as a woman's passport to higher status at all levels. This thesis revealed that the extent and quality of women's participation in decisions that affect household and community at village level is influenced by the level of education.

Morrisson and Jütting (2005:1080) question the role of education in increasing females' participation in the labour market or holding managerial positions if hindered by traditions. At national level research participants indicated that opening new spaces for women and/or male domination are no longer an issue or a problem. However, it was evident from some participants' responses that there is concern about the actions, inputs and performance of women who hold key posts in the government and other influential institutions and whether they are concerned about women's issues. Cornwall, (2003) asserts that it might be necessary to open up a space for women's voices by placing them in existing committees, but that may not be sufficient if female participants are unconcerned about other women or their perceptions and ideas are not respected by men. The issue of solidarity between men and women would remain as an important factor in building a suitable environment for participatory development (Weekes-Vagliani, 1995:70).

Another subject in relation to gender is that many younger men remained vulnerable because of limited opportunities and unemployment, and the focus of both projects on women despite their concern and emphasis on gender issues may be inappropriate. Cornwall (2003) points out that the voices of marginalised men, their gender issues and concerns, were absent from the participatory development process. The White Nile case study demonstrated that traditions also constrained some men's participation in community development. As a minority group, the new generations of educated, skilled and productive men who decided to stay in the villages were also suppressed by traditional leaders who opposed the change. Gender specialists and planners need to have open-minds and a clear vision about the whole situation.

The indigenous participatory system was investigated, especially in North Kordofan State. It illustrated that the cultural values provided meanings and a sense of identity for local communities in North Kordofan. These cultural values provide the communities with a framework through which they negotiate and make judgments regarding development interventions and providers. Within the same context this research demonstrated that local

folklore genres and practices among groups embody participatory concepts, ideologies and techniques. This folklore can provide the development planners and professionals with social data that can be used to motivate, mobilise and encourage local communities to achieve development (Hurreiz, 1981:158). The findings of this study supported previous research on the influence of social values in shaping the participatory development activities. Similar to Kassam (2002) these research findings suggest that the solidarity and experiences of North Kordofan communities has proved that some traditions and practices are very supportive and could form a base for genuine participation in development initiatives. It also suggests that the degree to which members of the community, grassroots associations, and committees trust each other, especially their leaders, is a crucial factor in protecting the cohesive bond and the affairs of the entire community (Fernando, 1995:177).

Local values were not shared with the NKRDP as the external development providers failed to construct a common understanding and build acceptable organisations that represented the diverse interests of the groups. The North Kordofan case study illustrated how people were inspired by values and internal social relationships. It demonstrated how people participated as both individuals and households to build and maintain community premises or share resources and labour to help those who are in need or who serve the community. For local people in North Kordofan participation is about people working collectively and effectively to develop their own community. Participation is seen as a value around which local people's lives have evolved and is a tool used by local people to share ideas and resources in order to make change and confront hardships and disasters. These concepts contradict the basic concepts of modernisation theory, which according to Rostow (1960) and Lewis (1995), reject the traditions and encourage adoption of external values. This thesis revealed that when people showed common interest, they tended to act collectively, driven by their commonly held values. These values have brought the shift from the classic development theory that was based on individualism and self-interest.

Within the North Kordofan context, participation in community development affairs especially in rural areas is seen as a value and an obligation. These social norms are usually institutionalised through formation of groups or associations outside the villages, in other cities or abroad. Public participation of individuals may be negotiated and mediated within households and communities and shaped by prevailing social norms and structures (Clever, 2001:51). These associations carry obligations and responsibilities towards their homelands

and the members of the group. The formation of voluntary grassroots organisations and their outcomes was influenced by people's needs and social cohesiveness.

It has been found that most of the local services and development are the outcomes of the efforts of grassroots organisations. Unfortunately, these grassroots organisations are much more localised and work on their own. They have neither links with national or state civil organisations nor do they have relationships with government institutions. This is due to a lack of ability to establish contacts and defend their rights. In this regard both projects failed to contribute to building networks and links between grassroots organisations and development providers, especially government authorities and the private sector.

Suspicion in regard to surrendering power by powerful groups or individuals was very much generalised. Participation in development activities, through voluntary grassroots organisations and practices challenge the common assumption about redistribution of power. Most of those with power (status and wealth) in North Kordofan, try to give something in return to their villages. This altruistic behaviour contrasts with the dominant assumption of existing literature regarding power relations, which tends to place power in an oppressive frame, at the expense of its productive aspects (Mosse, 2001). This raises the issues of moral values that should be considered when designing externally funded development projects.

People, despite the differences in their level of formal education and experiences, had sense and capability to judge what is best for them. Local people in the projects' sites were able to identify their problems and evaluate their experiences based on their own perspectives. They were able to present solutions, which might be different than those perceived by outsiders. However, their conditions forced them to adopt specific strategies when development providers tried to enforce their policies and visions. Evidence has demonstrated that local knowledge did not contribute to planning processes.

Both case studies have presented some evidence that local communities were not consulted and their knowledge was not sought when some interventions and activities were conducted, resulting in negative images of the staff's technical capabilities emerging in the failure of some interventions. This finding raises concern of the basic requirements of alternative development approaches that emphasise seeking and benefiting from local knowledge. The projects' technical staff may be reluctant to seek the opinions of local illiterate people, based

on the assumption that they will have insufficient knowledge to contribute (Uphoff, 1991:492).

The outcomes of this research contribute to the debates surrounding the theory and practice of participatory development. Firstly, by exploring the nature of interaction between local communities and government authorities, this thesis aims to identify the capacity and potential of both parties in determining the development process. This research has demonstrated that relationships between government authorities and local communities are almost non-existent. Secondly, it can be concluded that the WNASP's and the NKRDP's self-help approach has failed to make progress in helping the majority, who are poor, overcome the difficulties which contribute to shortage of food and lack of other services. This thesis supports Berner's and Phillips's (2005:27) suggestion that self-help approaches should be considered as a complement and not an alternative strategy to accessible public services and the redistribution of income and wealth. With regard to integration of women into development, this study makes a contribution to the debates around gender and development. This research has shown that there are concerns about the input of highly educated women, the vulnerability of unemployed and marginalised young men and the impact of strict gendered codes of behaviour existing in some communities, which may influence the women's involvement in development interventions. However, this concern about integrating women into development should also be accompanied by what women want and whether they truly have influence within development processes.

Having presented the findings of this study the following section briefly provides recommendations for future research.

### **Recommendations for Future Research**

The case studies could offer better understanding of participatory development processes within the Sudan especially if there are similarities between case studies and other settings. This thesis's findings provide guidelines for further studies in other communities. Research findings provided in this thesis may be used by development planners, decision makers, donors, project management, non-governmental and local community organisations to set policies or design strategies for promoting effective participatory approaches and plan for sustainable and successful future development interventions in Sudan. While this study has

focused on Sudan, these results may offer a better understanding of participatory development processes and provide guidance for future studies or planning of participatory development programmes that involve other communities.

Participatory development programmes usually take place in specific social and institutional contexts that require in depth investigation and analysis to understand power relations, local values and the nature and roles of indigenous structures and practices in various settings. This study has sought to explore and understand the nature and potential of development intervention in relation to participation in Sudan; therefore it has focused on exploring and analysing the elements that influence local people's interaction and participation in externally funded projects. Throughout this process some important issues such as the ideologies, roles and capabilities of development providers and facilitators, which were not intended to be explored or discussed in detail, have emerged.

Further studies that may focus on issues related to credibility and approaches of various development providers, sustainability of development interventions, women's status and indigenous participatory norms and practices in different settings, may enhance the depth of our knowledge and provide a framework for comprehensive development at local levels.

By highlighting the role of development providers this thesis has shed light on the importance of these groups as well as the need for more research in this area. All development providers claimed their aim was to empower the targeted communities. However, there was little evidence to show the empowering effects of their interventions, which indicates that further studies are needed to explore this issue. Specifically, more research needs to be undertaken to explore the policies and visions of development providers. There is a need to analyse their contribution and how well they are suited to local systems. The adoption of PRA techniques by the NKRDP suggests that there is a need for more research regarding the roles and styles that were employed by development organisations when adopting and facilitating these techniques.

Women's role in development attracts much debate. The research participants in the different settings of urban and rural have different perspectives on 'the focus on gender issues' and performance of high calibre female employees. This suggests that further in-depth studies on

the role and performance of women, especially at community and national levels, would enrich our knowledge of the educated women's potential and role.

There is an agreement in the literature that community organisations are crucial mechanisms for implementing development interventions. However, research findings on national NGOs raise concern about the roles and reputation of NGOs as trusted and accountable partners. These findings suggest that more research is needed regarding the roles, impacts and credibility of local NGOs and may advance the knowledge base of NGOs and development and enable the formulation of effective participatory development strategies.

It seems that there are very limited empirical studies that explore the indigenous participatory systems while externally planned approaches and mechanisms are addressed often. Another area for researchers of participatory development to explore is indigenous participatory values, structures and practices, and to discover how development agencies can accommodate these features to enhance the outcomes of their interventions.

## Appendices

### Appendix 4.1

#### Research Participants

<u>Code</u>	<u>Participant</u>	<u>Location/Organisation</u>
<b><u>National Level</u></b>		
BWF-FGD	Former UN Employee	Businesswomen Association
BW-FGD	Businesswoman	Businesswomen Association
DO-SSI	Development Officer	UNDP/ Khartoum
FAD-FGD	Female Academic	IRDS/ University of Khartoum
FA-FGD	Female Academic	El-Azhari University
FA-SSI	Administrative Officer	International NGO/ Khartoum
GAD-FGD	Gender Specialist	MAF/ Khartoum
FM-SSI	Former Minister	Parliament/ Khartoum
KC-SSI	Key Coordinator	IFAD/ Khartoum
MAI-SSI	Male Academic	IRDS/ University of Khartoum
MA-SSI	Male Academic	IAAS/ University of Khartoum
MJ-SSI	Male Journalist	Rayaam Newspaper/ Khartoum
SG-SSI	Government Official	Federal Rule Chamber / Khartoum
<b><u>Case Study One</u></b>		
FDO-SSI	Former Development Officer	WNASP
FGE-FGD	Female Government Employee	the White Nile State
FE-SSI	Female Extension Worker	WNASP
FFEO-SSI	Female Extension Officer	WNASP
FP-FGD	Female Participant	WNASP
FT-FGD	Female Teacher	the White Nile State
IO-SSI	Investment Officer	Farmer Commercial Bank
LP-FGD	Male Farmer	the White Nile State
MF-SSI	Male Farmer	the White Nile State
MF-FGD	Male Farmer	the White Nile State
MPC- SSI	Village Popular Committee	the White Nile State
MP-SSI	Male Participant	the White Nile State
PO-SSI	Planning Officer	MFLF/ the White Nile State
SAM-SSI	Senior Agricultural Manager	MAAI/ the White Nile State.
SAO-SSI	Senior Agricultural Officer	MAAI / the White Nile State
SGO-SSI	Senior Government Officer	the White Nile State
SIO-SSI	Senior Investment Officer	Agricultural Bank of Sudan
SM-SSI	Senior Manager	FNC/ the White Nile State
SW-SSI	Social Worker	the White Nile State
Umda-SSI	Locality Leader	the White Nile State
VL- SSI	Village Leader	the White Nile State
VNS-SSI	Village Nursery Supervisor	WNASP

## Case Study Two

AEX-SSI	Extension Specialist	MAAI / North Kordofan State
CH-SSI	Chairperson VDO	NKRDP / Bara 2
FCP-FGD	Female, Credit Participant	Bara 2
FFW-FGD	Female, Fieldworker	Bara locality
FM-SSI	Female Member	Popular Development Works.
FNCP-FGD	Female, Non-Participant	NKRDP / Bara 2
FPO-SSI	Former NKRDP Officer	El-Obeid / North Kordofan State
FVDO-SSI	Female Member of VDO	NKRDP / Bara 1
FVPC-SSI	Female Member of VPC	NKRDP / Bara 1
FW-SSI	Fieldworker	NKRDP / Um-Ruwaba locality
IFL-FGD	Influential Village Leader	NKRDP / Um-Ruwaba 1
KD-SSI	A key Director	MFLF / North Kordofan State
KM-SSI	Key Member	Hawa Organisation, NKS
MFR-FGD	Male Farmer	NKS / Um Ruwaba 3
MF-SSI	Male Farmer	NKRDP / Um-Ruwaba 4
MM-SSI	Male Member	Popular Development Works
MVDO-FGD	Member of VDO	NKRDP / Um-Ruwaba 4
PVDO-FGD	President of VDO	NKRDP / Um-Ruwaba 4
MV-FGD	Male Villager	NKRDP / Um-Ruwaba 1
MVPC-FGD	Member of VPC	NKRDP / Bara 1
MW-SSI	Midwife	NKRDP / Bara-2
NRS-SSI	Natural Resources Specialist	NKRDP.
PFP-SSI	Poor Female Participant	NKRDP / Um-Ruwaba 4
RP-FGD,	Research Participant	NKRDP / Bara 2
RRP-FGD	Rich Research Participant	NKRDP / Bara 2
Sheikh-FGD	Village Sheikh	NKRDP / Bara 2
Sheikh-FGD	Village Sheikh	NKRDP / Um-Ruwaba 2
SH-FGD	Village Sheikh	NKRDP / Bara 3
SMN-SSI	Senior Manager	NKRDP
SPM-SSI	Programme Manager	NKRDP
SPO-SSI	Senior Planning Officer	MFLF / North Kordofan State
SSDO-SSI	Social Development Officer	MESA
ST-FGD	School Teacher	NKRDP / Um-Ruwaba 3
VL-FGD	Village Leader	NKRDP / Bara 2
YMP-SSI	Young Male Participant	NKRDP / Um-Ruwaba 1



## Appendix 4.2

### Structured interview

(NKRDP staff)

#### a. Personal profile:

Gender: .....

Job: .....

Education: .....

Working experience:.....Yrs.

#### b. Project approach:

1. What does participation mean to you?
2. Have you attended any training programmes in the field of community development or people's participation? If yes, please elaborate, where, how long, and how that was useful to your present work?
3. What are the purposes of involving people in the project?
4. What are the project participatory approaches?
5. Do you have experience with participatory methods? If yes, please explain?
6. Who decided where the work should be done? And how was funding arranged?
7. Are there any excluded or marginalised groups? If any, who and why?
8. How does the work start in the villages?
9. Did the project seek local people contribution in technical matters?
10. Did the project involve the local people in data collection, analysis, keeping records and reporting?
11. Who set and applied the rules and regulations that organise the development activities?
12. Does the project design allow for accommodating new ideas and making changes?
13. Did the community express an interest in any activities, which the project could not respond to it? If any, please explain?
14. Are there any development activities initiated and implemented by the community, without the project intervention or support?

15. Are there any forms of conflicts within the community? If any, what are the reasons and mechanisms for resolutions?
16. Do the project manager, senior staff and government officials come, sit and listen to the local people?
17. How does the project staff interact, share experiences and learn from the local people?
18. Can you think of any strategies or approaches that may lead to better performance and achievements?

**c. Costs and benefits of participation:**

1. Who benefits more? If any, why?
2. And who did not benefit? If any –why?
3. Is there any conflict or tension as a result of the project? If so, please explain?
4. Are there any changes in social structure, values, traditions, beliefs, and practices of the community as a result of the project’s interventions?
5. Are there any families whose living conditions improved after participating in the project?
6. How can sustainable participation, especially after the withdrawal of the project, be maintained?
7. How can the village development organisations take over and manage their own development and community affairs after withdrawal of the project?
8. How do you see the sustainability of the following interventions after the project stops?

<b>Interventions</b>	<b>Sustainable (Y/N)</b>	<b>How/ Why</b>
Village Development committees		
Informal credit		
Formal credit		
Literacy programme		
Agricultural extension		
Natural resources components.		
Services providers		

**d. Factors that affect participation:**

1. What are the factors that promoted participation in different activities?
2. What are the factors that constrained people's participation? If any, how could they be overcome?
3. Are there any factors or conditions affecting women's participation?
4. How can the level and quality of participation be improved?
5. How can the state institutions and people in power be involved in empowering the poor and marginalised people?
6. What was the influence of local culture on participatory processes?

## Appendix 4.3

### Documentation Sheet

Method: .....

Date : .....

Place: .....

Duration: .....

Number of participants: .....

Gender: ..... Position: ..... Profession:.....

Topic for discussion: .....

Brief summary of interview /PRA session:

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Special notes:

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**Source: Adapted from Flick, 1996 cited in Flick, 2002:172.**

## Appendix 5.1

### Islamic Banking: Modes of Deposits and Financing Operations

Islamic banking operates through the following deposits and financing operations:

- 1) *Musharaka*: 'is an equity participation contract between the bank and the client. The two parties contribute jointly to finance a project. In practice, labour, skills, management, goodwill and credit-worthiness and contacts can also form the partners' contribution. The main feature of this instrument are (i) profits are shared according to an agreed ratio, but losses are borne in proportion to contribution; (ii) the contract can be open-ended or tied to a specific project; (iii) each party has an option of participation in the project management';
- 2) *Mudharaba*: 'is another equity participation contract. It is a trustee-type finance contract, where one party provides capital and the other labour. The main features of this contract are: (i) profits are distributed according to an agreed ratio; (ii) in case of a loss, the provider of labour will not be compensated for labour, while the provider of capital bears all the financial loss, provided there was no violation of contract, mismanagement or criminal conduct on the part of the working partner; (iii) the *Mudharaba* contract can be restricted ( e.g. to a specific transaction) or unrestricted; (iv) the restricted *Mudharaba* cannot be terminated until its conditions are fulfilled';
- 3) *Murabaha*: 'is a debt instrument. It is a purchase and resale contract, with the resale price based on cost plus profit mark-up. The bank purchases the goods ordered by the client and resells them to him at a higher price, usually on deferred payment. The main features of this contract are: (i) the cost and mark-up must be known to the bank and the client; (ii) the bank must assume ownership of the goods prior to reselling them to the client (bearing all the ownership risks in the interim); (iii) the client's promise to buy the goods, purchased on his behalf by the bank, may or may not be binding, in Sudan, it is binding; (iv) no interest is levied on late payments, but the bank could require collateral; (v) the bank cannot sell a *Murabaha* contract to a third party';
- 4) *Salam*: 'is another debt instrument. It is a purchase contract with deferred delivery of goods (opposite the *Murabaha*) and is mostly used in agriculture finance. The main features of this contract are: (i) the contract applies only to products where availability of maturity date is normally assured and their quality and quantity can be specified; (ii) the bank pays the client the full negotiated price of the contracted goods (e.g. crops) when the contract is signed; (iii) the seller is only obliged to deliver the promised products or the price he/she received from the bank if the products could be delivered';

- 5) *Qard al-Hasan* (Good loan): 'is also a debt instrument. It is an interest-free loan contract, usually collateralised';
- 6) *Ijara*: 'is a quasi-debt instrument. It is a leasing contract where a party leases an asset for a specified amount and term. The main features of this contract are: (i) the owner of the asset (the bank) bears all the risks associated with ownership; (ii) the asset can be sold at a negotiated market price effectively resulting in the sale of the *Ijara* contract; (iii) the contract can be structured as a lease-purchase contract, where each lease payment includes a portion of an agreed asset price; (iv) the contract can be made for a term covering the assets expected life'.

Sources: IMF (1999) (cited in Deng, 2000:39-40).

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