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Social Capital and Community Participation in Development
The Case of the Direct Community Financing Programme in Post-Conflict Sierra Leone

A thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Philosophy in Development Studies at Massey University Palmerston North, New Zealand

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2007
Abstract

Community participation seemingly appeals to a number of development agencies and institutions. Participation is seen as a means through which project outcomes can be improved. Nonetheless, “participation” as a concept is perceived, understood and defined differently. Therefore, different objectives are identified for undertaking participation. Some believe that pursuit of economic objectives has come to dominate development practice, and others believe that development practice has neglected its human or social aspects. Despite the rhetoric, past community development practice has either made little improvement in people’s lives, or resulted in excluding some members of target communities. With the new institutional focus, and community empowerment as the objective of participation, the problem for development intervention is how to enhance community participation.

Using a case study in post-conflict Sierra Leone, this research examines the Direct Community Financing programme, an externally funded development programme in ten communities in the Pujehun Port Loko districts. The study sought to investigate the extent to which social capital, as a community asset, facilitates community participation in development given the institutional environment and the objectives of the development intervention.

The study finds that community participation is directly related to community level social capital, with high social capital communities recording high participation in the programme. The study also finds that community control, ownership and decisions over project activities, as well as the extent to which the projects meet community needs, also affect participation. Similarly, the institutional rules and the (designated) roles of stakeholders are equally important for enhancing participation. In contrast, a community’s historical experience, discrimination and exclusion, selective participation and communal conflicts, among other factors, can negatively affect community participation.
Acknowledgements

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I would like in particular to thank my supervisors, Dr. Manuhuia Barcham and Dr. Katherine McKinnon, for their critical assessment, disciplined and logical thinking, and guiding me through an exceptionally arduous journey. They were more than my supervisors. On many occasions, they demonstrated understanding of my personal circumstances. In times of pain and grief, they consoled. I am indebted to them. There was invaluable assistance from colleagues, Farzana, Tessa, Anja and Andy, which made the work easier.

I would also like to thank colleagues at the Ministry of Development and Economic Planning in Sierra Leone for their support and assistance during the fieldwork. I wish to thank in particular Mr Sahid Kargbo and my driver, Ibrahim (‘George Bush’) for spending uncomfortable nights in the field. I am also particularly grateful to Mr. S.J. Braima, Lecturer, Fourah Bay College, University of Sierra Leone, for his invaluable assistance in devising the questionnaire. I am even more grateful to Mr. John Ngebeh, J.C. Tucker, Mrs Abigail Bundu, Districts and Regional Co-ordinators, and staff of NaCSA, who were always ready to provide me the support I needed during the fieldwork.

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## Glossary

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kombi</td>
<td>rotating labour group (in Mende)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kabotho</td>
<td>rotating labour group (in Temne)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Osusu</td>
<td>rotating savings scheme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poro</td>
<td>secret society for men</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sande</td>
<td>secret society for women</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wunde</td>
<td>male dominated secret society in Southern Sierra Leone</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Acronyms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acronym</th>
<th>Full Form</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ABS</td>
<td>Australian Bureau of Statistics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AfDB</td>
<td>African Development Bank</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CBO</td>
<td>Community Development Organization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CDF</td>
<td>Civil Defence Force</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CDO</td>
<td>Community Development Officer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CDP</td>
<td>Community-Driven Programme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DC</td>
<td>District Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DCF</td>
<td>Direct Community Financing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DFID</td>
<td>Department for International Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FGD</td>
<td>Focus Group Discussion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GoSL</td>
<td>Government of Sierra Leone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HIPC</td>
<td>Highly Indebted Poor Country</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IDA</td>
<td>International Development Assistance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IEC</td>
<td>Information, Education &amp; Communication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M&amp;E</td>
<td>Monitoring and Evaluation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MUHEC</td>
<td>Massey University Human Ethics Committee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NaCSA</td>
<td>National Commission for Social Action</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NPAC</td>
<td>National Project Approval Committee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NSAP</td>
<td>National Social Action Project</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PMC</td>
<td>Project Management Committee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PO</td>
<td>Project Officer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PPA</td>
<td>Participatory Poverty Assessment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PRI</td>
<td>The Canadian Policy Research Initiative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PRSP</td>
<td>Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RC</td>
<td>Regional Co-ordinator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RPAC</td>
<td>Regional Project Approval Committee</td>
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<td>SAP</td>
<td>Structural Adjustment Programme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SCAT</td>
<td>Social Capital Assessment Tools</td>
</tr>
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<td>SSL</td>
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