

**RURAL DEVELOPMENT
AND MICROFINANCE PROJECTS
IN SUDAN**



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With Special Attention
to Community Participation

Nawal El-Gack

With a Foreword by
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and
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The Edwin Mellen Press
Lewiston•Queenston•Lampeter

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

El Gack, Nawal.

Rural development and microfinance projects in Sudan : with special attention to community participation / Nawal El-Gack ; with a foreword by John Overton and Regina Scheyvens.

p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN-13: 978-0-7734-3075-4 (hardcover)

ISBN-10: 0-7734-3075-X (hardcover)

1. Rural development--Sudan. 2. Rural development projects--Sudan--Citizen participation. 3. Sudan--Rural condition. 4. Microfinance--Sudan. I. Overton, John, 1951- II. Title.

HN787.Z9E4 2012

338.9624--dc23

. 2012034599

hors série.

A CIP catalog record for this book is available from the British Library.

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The Edwin Mellen Press
Box 450
Lewiston, New York
USA 14092-0450

The Edwin Mellen Press
Box 67
Queenston, Ontario
CANADA L0S 1L0

The Edwin Mellen Press, Ltd.
Lampeter, Ceredigion, Wales
UNITED KINGDOM SA48 8LT

Printed in the United States of America

This book is dedicated to all development planners and practitioners who are concerned about development in practice and care about genuine community participation.

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Glossary of Sudanese Terms

Al-Hakama'a	Wise woman who provides consultation
Dar	Community centre
El-Goodeya	Community-based mechanism of conflict resolution
Feddan	Unit = 0.42 ha = 1.03 acre
Ijara	Leasing contract
Mudharaba	Participation contract
Murabaha	Purchase and resale contract
Musharaka	Participation contract
Nafir	Mobilization
Qard al-Hasan	Good loan
Salam	Purchase contract
Sanduq	Traditional savings, revolving fund
Sheikh	Village headman
Takaful	Social justice and solidarity
Umda	Locality headman
Wali	State Governor

Glossary of Terms and Abbreviations

ABS	Agricultural Bank of Sudan
ASF	Agricultural Support Fund
BWA	Business Women Association
DANIDA	Danish International Development Agency
DSRI	Development Studies and Research Institute
DFID	Department for International Development, UK
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
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 Centre for Research and Training, Khartoum, Sudan
GoS	Government of the Sudan
GROs	Grassroots Organizations
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
IMF	International Monetary Fund
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)
MFNE	Ministry of Finance and National Economic
CDS	Comprehensive Development Strategy, Sudan
NGOs	Non-Governmental Organizations
NKRDP	North Kordofan Rural Development Project
ODA	Overseas Development Administration, UK
ODI	Overseas Development Institute, UK
OECD	Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development

WB-PDLG	World Bank-Participatory Development Working Group
PDW	Popular Development Works
SAPs	Structural Adjustment Programs
SCOVA	Sudan Council of Voluntary Agencies
SDD	Sudanese Diners
SIDA	Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency
SOS	Sahel International, UK
SPLA/M	Sudan People's Liberation Army, Movement
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
UNEP	United Nations Environment Program
UNICEF	United Nations Children and Education Fund
UNOPS	United Nations Office for Project Services
UNRISD	United Nations Research Institute for Social Development
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
VDOs	Village Development Organizations
WB	World Bank
WFP	United Nations World Food Program
WID	Women in Development
WRI	World Resources Institute

Foreword by John Overton

Dr Nawal El-Gack's book on participatory development in the Sudan is unique and illuminating, making an important contribution to development thinking. This is particularly so because it reflects insights of the author at several levels: as one who was born and raised in this fascinating country; one who has worked as a development practitioner for both NGOs and multilateral organizations in Sudan and the wider region and experienced firsthand both effective and ineffective approaches to development; as a woman, who has witnessed the personal struggles and resourcefulness of some of the most vulnerable people in this country; and, importantly, as one who completed in-depth research into the development of Sudan for her PhD thesis. These are unique insights, for rarely have researchers had such a balance of practice and theory and not often do we see in a book such as these insider perspectives on development: those of practitioners, women and Sudanese. Nawal El-Gack brings all of these roles and insights to bear on the topic of participatory development.

Particularly since publication of Kothari and Cooke's book 'Participation: the New Tyranny?' in 2001, development theorists and practitioners have debated the strengths and weaknesses of this approach to development which is centered on facilitating people-led, empowering development. El-Gack's book adds considerably to discourse on participatory development by demonstrating that efforts to enhance local development should be centered on an in-depth understand of culture and society, including existing resources and institutions, and should be cognizant of the broader political, social and economic contexts.

Nawal writes with passion and concern about the need for effective participation but in ways which build on and enhance established local institutions and practices of participation. Too often, development agencies insist on participation in ways that they determine and which overlook how local people interact and come to collective decisions. Practitioners and academics will learn much from this study. Whilst participation has become part of development orthodoxy, there is a continuing need to subject it to critical scrutiny and to seek ways to localize and align participatory practices with the resources, values and protocols of particular communities. This book gives us strong leads as to how this might be achieved.

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Preface

The concept of participation in development has attracted much discussion since the early 1970s. Although the fundamental concepts have been ultimately accepted, the shortcomings of participatory development practices are a source of heated debate. To contribute to this discussion and create greater awareness of participatory development concepts and practices, I conducted this research to achieve an in-depth understanding of the nature of interactions between primary stakeholders and development providers, and the outcomes of their joint efforts. This study explores and analyzes the experiences of participatory development projects in the real context of Sudan.

In 1992 the Government of the Sudan developed a ten-year Comprehensive Development Strategy. Within the strategy's framework, the government adopted neoliberal policies and committed to encouraging production, using resources more efficiently, and building sustainable financial and institutional structures. The strategy was proclaimed as able to increase popular participation in order to foster social equilibrium and protect locals from the negative effects of liberalization and free market policies. To achieve development at grassroots levels, the government has initiated participatory loan-based projects. The outcomes of this have raised concerns and debate about the various visions and practices of both implementing agencies and local partners.

The study begins by examining the political systems and civic movements of Sudan. It goes on to explore the experience of the White Nile Agricultural Services Project (WNASP) and the North Kordofan Rural Development Project (NKRDP) as case studies at grassroots level, identifying the

strengths and shortcomings of both. This enables exploration as to how macroeconomic policies have influenced microeconomic initiatives. The selection of case studies in two different locations in Sudan provides a unique examination of people's involvement in development, in real settings. Using various methods, I have examined the nature and potential of both projects' approaches and interventions, with the aim of discovering whether the development agencies have employed locally acceptable approaches, empowered local communities, and generated desirable changes. The study also attempts to identify factors which influence participation, and to suggest ways to improve the practice of participatory development.

Sudanese society, especially in rural areas, is characterized by strong social ties between people as relatives, neighbors and friends. The concepts of sharing, giving, and helping others is deeply rooted in popular historical narratives, culture and consciousness, and hence is reflected in daily practices. The hardships of life and urban migration due to drought and lack of or poor public services have created frustration and social ill-being, especially in the North Kordofan and White Nile states. In this way, both projects aimed to improve the living conditions of rural communities and empower local organizations.

This study found that Sudanese culture encourages participatory initiatives and praises those who sincerely initiate and support actions that benefit the community. Despite high levels of poverty and limited resources, village development showed that most local services existing in both case studies were the products of the inputs of the local communities themselves. The study demonstrates how local communities, when faced with crises, have managed to adopt internal

survival strategies without external assistance. In these contexts, the projects may have introduced new ideas and approaches; however, people were not engaged in participation which could achieve empowerment or create concrete changes in their lives. The project outcomes were influenced by the policies of development providers and individual staff behavior; environmental factors and available resources; socio-cultural norms; power relations; and communities' previous experiences, organization and education levels. These findings suggest that designing participatory development programs primarily requires an in-depth understanding of prevailing social, economic, political and material environments. Secondly, development providers should adopt approaches that are amenable to negotiations with communities and which confront oppression. Finally, if participatory development is to achieve its objectives, local communities must be provided with resources, information and skills; and development providers and associated staff must act, in what is deemed by the populace to be moral correct.

Based on the evidence given by powerful individuals in North Kordofan, this study suggests a moral-obligatory approach as a way of improving the practice of participatory development in Sudan. Such an approach requires a fundamental change in the policies, visions and credibility of development providers. If the fundamentals of participatory development are adhered to, and strategies are designed collectively, there is an opportunity to engender real change in the lives of those targeted for development.

Acknowledgments

This study is a product of the input, cooperation and support I have received from a range of people and organizations to which I remain indebted and wish to acknowledge.

I am very grateful to my supervisors: Prof. John Overton, Ms. Janet Reid and Dr. Maria Borovnik. My sincere gratitude to John for the insightful guidance, continuous support and encouragement I received throughout this process.

My deepest gratitude to my family: to my husband, Mohamed Ugool for his understanding and continual support; and to my sons Mahmoud, Ahmed and Abobaker, who have lightened my life and allowed me room to complete this study.

I acknowledge with gratitude the hospitality, cooperation and input of the research participants in Sudan. Without their contributions these research findings would not exist.

Much credit is due to the International Fund for Agricultural Development, Central Unit in Khartoum and the project management in North Kordofan for the opportunity given to me to conduct my field work and be a part of the project's environment. I would like to thank Mr. Yassin Doleib, the Monitoring and Evaluation Manager of NKRDP, who granted me permission to study the project, and arranged access to the project's documents and participants.

I am very grateful to all the staff of the National Forests Corporation (FNC) for their support and assistance in various aspects. My sincere gratitude goes to my colleague Anwar Abdel-Hameed, who provided accommodation and

transportation and introduced me to various local authorities and organizations in the White Nile State.

I acknowledge and appreciate the financial and logistic support I received from the Faculty of Arts and Design, University of Canberra, Australia, while publishing this thesis into a book.

My heartfelt gratitude to my family and friends in Sudan: my mother Aisha M. Jubara, my sister Eiman Masad and my brothers, Omer El-Gaili, El-Fatih Salih and Abass A. Al-Kalifa, who have always been there for me. My thanks go to Nadia Jones for proof-reading the manuscript.

1

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 of the 1950s and 1960s focused on economic growth and the top-down diffusion of development, and had significant influence on postwar development in developing countries (Brohman, 1996:202). These models relied on greater production to generate higher income and consequently reduce poverty and improve the populations’ well-being. These top-down approaches have been criticized on both theoretical and practical grounds (Stein and Harper, 2000:68). Many analysts contend that mainstream development strategies largely increased socio-economic inequality in most countries. Furthermore, the outcomes of top-down strategies suggest that there is more than one method, theory, or solution to attain improved physical, social, and economic environments for communities (Kotval, 2006:87).

Despite the fact that various schools of thought affirm the importance of belief systems and social norms, the current practices of economic development pay little attention to human values and traditions. In fact, they continue to be influenced by supply and demand indicators in addressing the relationships between communities, development and natural

resources; for example, humans are seen as 'resources'. The Asian Development Bank states that 'sustained economic growth depends crucially on how well human resources are developed, and how efficiently land, capital and technology are mobilized. Educated manpower may be wasted if capital and raw material are lacking, if economic policies are inappropriate, if entrepreneurship is lacking or if political structure are unstable' (The Asian Development Bank 1990:170 cited in Hossain, et.al 2010:49). This carefully phrased statement reflects a view of development as economic, rather than about sustainable participation.

On the other hand, development organizations acknowledged that major development projects had failed to realize their intended objectives precisely because communities were not involved in their formulation (Rahnema, 1992:117). Since the early 1970s, these organizations began searching for different approaches which accommodate the needs, perceptions and knowledge of the grassroots. It became clear that without such participation, development planners could not adequately understand the aspirations and perspectives of the diverse public they served. When alternative development theories emerged in the 1970s these 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 for achieving economic development. This assumption was based on ability of development providers in exploring and accepting people's knowledge. Otherwise development cannot produce "real fruit"' (Schumacher, 2000:140).

Theories of participatory development asserted that persistent poverty and, inappropriate and unsustainable

development programs were the outcomes of top-down planning. Local communities were not involved in identifying objectives and designing programs (Mosse, 2001:28). Despite recognizing this as a deficiency, there exists the possibility that development organizations lack the vision and experience of involving people. The World Bank confirmed that ‘the Bank and government agencies have insufficient understanding of how to encourage communities to contribute to project design or to build effective organizations that represent different groups of a community’ (World Bank, 2001a:2). Arising from this debate, concepts of participatory development emerged, which entail political, social and economic aspects. These are conventionally represented as an outcome of the recognition of the shortcomings of top-down development (Cooke and Kothari, 2001:5).

The central focus of ‘alternative’ development in the 1970s was on people’s basic needs (Brohman, 1996:208). Alternative development approaches further argued for people’s involvement in decisions and activities that would encourage their empowerment. Major donors and development agencies began to adopt the concept of ‘participation’ or ‘participatory development’ in order to imbue the programs with effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability and the ability to promote stakeholders’ capacities, self-reliance and empowerment.

The importance of participation in development was stressed by numerous development theorists and professionals. For example, Kumar explains that the debate in the 1980s about participation focused on various areas of concern; the new movement stressed the need for self-reliance, and additionally accorded attention to ecological aspects, gender, human rights,

world peace, self-determination and democratization. Schneider and Libercier affirm that participation should be central to development efforts, through adjusting conventional approaches and methodologies, establishing new relationships between stakeholders, and viewing people as partners and actors in their own development. In 1999, the World Bank's research suggested that participation promotes a sense of ownership in development, attracts prolonged attention to human rights issues, improves the sustainability of development programs, and promotes learning and results-based orientation. It began to be asserted that certain conditions are necessary for enhancing participation, such as democratization, decentralization, building confidence within and between various actors, a readiness to share power, and access to assets and rights. In the new millennium there is a tendency to broaden the participation debate to encompass governance issues. This is accompanied by the emergence of the 'participatory citizenship' concept, which links participation between the political, social and community spheres (Gaventa, 2004:29).

The practice of participatory development has increasingly received strong critiques as many challenges have been identified, specifically with regard to community mobilization, capacity building, planning, partnerships and sustainability. To overcome these constraints, Kelly and Caputo (2006:234) suggest that greater attention should be directed to the role of governmental and non-governmental agencies.

To contribute to this debate by providing evidence from real experiences, this study examines the practice of participatory development in Sudan. This chapter introduces

the research project and outlines the main issues and themes of the study.

The Significance of the Study

Today, the governments of many developing countries, including Sudan, claim that they are promoting a philosophy of participation that encourages people's capacities and right to determine their own development. International and national development organizations also emphasize the importance of involving people in the decision-making process. Despite this claim, and despite the widespread acceptance and implementation of participatory development, the actual effects of participatory approaches on beneficiaries and on local power structures remain unknown, as does their level of sustainability (Eylers and Foster, 1998:101). The beneficiaries are expected to contribute to development interventions by assuming control over the distribution of local resources and the running of 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 the issue of sustainability, the World Bank's Operations Evaluation Department (World Bank, 2001a:1) found that only nine of its twenty-seven agriculture projects were classified as 'sustained', a further eight were 'doubtful' and the remaining ten were 'not sustained'. However, the assumption is that if participatory processes work accordingly, they should automatically ensure the sustainability of any designed or approved policies.

The concept of popular participation in development policy formulation has remained a matter of rhetoric rather than

of practice. Many participatory development theorists assert that support of and belief in participation is near universal, but that the development of tools and techniques to put it into practice, and the knowledge of potential obstacles and solutions to overcome them, has lagged behind (Mathur, 1995; Gerrit, 1997). There is also concern about the capacity of participatory approaches to portray the realities of poor people and involve them in the decision-making process (Cleaver, 2001). This raises two questions: whether participatory approaches conform to or conflict with socio-cultural contexts, and how to enhance the results of participatory processes. This study poses the possibility that it is the inability of participatory development literature to reflect the real experiences of communities at grassroots level that leads to the failure of development to initiate real change. Clearly, there is a need for holistic empirical analysis of the participatory practices of development projects in various settings to contribute to the design of measures for improvement. To understand the motives for popular involvement in development there is also a need for in-depth investigation of indigenous values, organizations and practices of participation.

The Government of the Sudan and the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) have planned and implemented several development projects as joint initiatives. These projects have, by employing participatory approaches, aimed to both support government policies and improve the living conditions of targeted communities. Meaningful discussion on the implications of participation requires a material context (Mosse, 2001:18), and for this reason, the North Kordofan Rural Development Project (NKRDP) in Sudan was chosen for study. While in the field, the IFAD

Central Coordination Unit in Khartoum and research participants from academic institutions (DSRI, IAAS) encouraged me to study the White Nile Agricultural Services Project (WNASP), as this was one of the pioneering micro-credit projects utilizing new development approaches. Both development projects offered a framework within which to understand the nature, potential and likely effects of development interventions in real settings.

Participation as a discipline and practice is of professional interest to me. I have been involved in community development programs both as a development practitioner and as a consultant for development projects in several countries. I have also volunteered my services to different non-governmental organizations (NGO's) in Sudan, Tanzania and the Middle East. Over the course of many years of being a development practitioner, I have become an active participant, rather than merely a passive observer. Thus, as an active participant it was more difficult to view the situation as an external observer would. Analysis requires an awareness of the researcher's role, in order to contain personal impact on the research, avoid subjectivity, and be fully accountable for one's views, thinking and conduct in research (Olesen, 1994). I consider that my previous experience in different regions of Sudan were resources that helped in gathering data and understanding the expressions and behavior of local people.

The information and conclusions arising from this study of projects in Sudan will be examined in relation to the theoretical frameworks of participatory development and alternative development approaches. The study addresses two issues that are not widely covered in development literature. The first is the lack of knowledge concerning real experiences

of participatory development within the Sudanese context, as this has not yet been explored through empirical studies. The second issue is the actual and potential role of local participatory values, organizations and practices. This study provides information that can be used by development planners, decision-makers, donors, project management staff, and non-governmental and local community organizations to design strategies and implement policies which promote genuine participation, and set a precedent for successful sustainable future development interventions in Sudan.

Research Question and Objectives

Since the early 1990s, popular participation has been theoretically adopted in Sudan within the mainstream discourse of development, as a result of the conclusion that top-down approaches have failed. In practice, government commitments have neither led to effective and genuine decentralization nor to a better quality of life (Al-Hardallu, 2001:131). In this regard, this study seeks to examine the nature and potential of participatory development interventions and mechanisms, due to the need to understand the ideologies, goals and aspirations of the actors involved in order to analyze a concept (Broad and Beishon, 1977:17). In addressing these issues, the following central research question has been developed:

What are the outcomes of participatory development projects in Sudan?

To answer this question the study will:

Describe the nature and potential of participatory approaches adopted by development projects in Sudan;

Identify the capacities through which development providers' policies, project objectives, staff behaviors, and local participants' power, values and motives have influenced the participatory development process;

Theorize the potential of local participatory organizations and practices to mobilize and ensure the contribution of local communities in development interventions;

Assess how gender and social differences affect the participation of women and other groups in development initiatives;

Ascertain the factors that have influenced popular participation in development projects;

Identify ways through which participatory development practices can be improved.

To address this central question, which requires studying the complex, multidimensional social phenomenon of participation, I have resolved to select a case study strategy. This is a comprehensive research strategy and not merely a method of data collection or a design feature (Yin (2003)). As aforementioned, my two case studies were the North Kordofan Rural Development Project (NKRDP) and the White Nile Agricultural Services Project (WNASP). The NKRDP was implemented in 2001 and phased out in 2008, while the WNASP was realized between 1996 to 2001. At the time of my collecting research data in the field the WNASP staff and assets were no longer in place. The participatory development aspects of the WNASP, which I refer to as a secondary case study, are examined in Chapter Six. The NKRDP is reported in two chapters (Seven and Eight) and is utilized as the major case

study. The selection of case studies was influenced by the phenomenon under study; this variously entailed participation, representation of local settings, and the availability of cases that accord opportunities for studying participatory approaches to development. Both projects were located in areas where there existed diversity in terms of people's origins and traditions, as well as in the physical and natural environment. Such contrasts offered opportunities to conduct comprehensive research and explore the extent of popular participation in externally financed projects. Accordingly, the analysis is based on the experiences of those involved in both projects. However, academics, politicians, NGO activists, and development practitioners at a national level were also interviewed in order to develop a broad understanding of the Sudanese framework for development. Therefore, due to comprehensive analysis of participatory processes in Sudan, the study also involved a holistic, national perspective.

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

The participants studied included local people within the project sites, regardless of whether they benefited from the

projects; project staff; and state officials who influenced project operations. Those studied also included development professionals, NGO activists, and academics, all of whom have acquired diverse knowledge of local participatory culture and have had experience with various development interventions. The study promoted self-reflection among different actors and primary participants. It also encouraged discussion of this between the participants and the researcher. Having a diverse pool of participants ranging from project management staff to local communities offered opportunities for examining, through personal contact, a wider range of related issues and concepts. Women at both project sites were very much involved in social relations and volunteered a great deal of knowledge concerning local environments and people. Being a female researcher facilitated interaction with various community groups, particularly women and families.

Local participants were queried about their experiences with and perceptions of participation and participatory development interventions, and about how the outcomes of participatory development could be enhanced. They were also asked about indigenous systems of development and the nature and degree of interaction between indigenous and external systems. The contributions from development specialists gave insight into different interpretations of the issues that influenced development processes in general, and popular participation in particular.

The case study findings revealed that local people were very aware of their needs and problems, and had developed their own ways of participating in development initiatives. The study proves that people's values and traditions have great influence on the way they interact with external development

providers. The findings, mainly in the study of the NKRDP, contradict the common assumption that powerful elite groups often manipulate participatory development processes. This case study raises concerns about the policies and actions of development providers, and the unity and technical skills of development professionals and their willingness to accommodate local knowledge and values and to employ a process approach throughout the project stages. The study also raises concerns about the role, contribution, and reputation of national NGOs.

This study revealed several challenges facing participatory development in Sudan: firstly, the lack of productive relationships between government institutions and ordinary people. Such effective relationships require a political context in which citizen's rights are respected by the government, and the disenfranchised are given opportunities to voice opinions, participate, and establish regulations to secure their rights and guarantee accountability and transparency (Vincent, 2004). The second challenge is the ability of projects to provide financial and technical support to community organizations which represent diverse interest groups and are fully accountable to the poor and marginalized. Finally, there is a need to encourage the establishment of effective networks between local community organizations, the private sector, international organizations, and government institutions.

The emphasis in this study is on the importance of indigenous values, structures, and practices that shape local participatory development efforts. The study suggests that utilizing local knowledge and supporting locally-trusted grassroots organizations when planning and implementing development interventions is crucial. It also proposes the

adoption of a moral commitment approach that ensures the transparency and accountability of all development partners, including government institutions, development agencies, and national NGOs.

Contribution to knowledge and practice of participatory development is demonstrated through the following: 1) exploration of the development project practices 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 of development interventions; and 3) identification of local communities' participatory values, organizations and practices within specific contexts, and proposal of measures that can enhance the outcomes of participation.

This study focuses on participatory approaches to development at the grassroots level. However, in the process of analyzing the experiences of two rural and microcredit projects, several significant issues emerged which require further analysis. It appears that there is a need for further research regarding the roles of development providers, in particular government and international development agencies and the impact of their staff behaviors and intervention methods. Further research is also required to explore the values, credibility, and accountability of NGOs. The local participatory cultures, organizations, and practices in various communities are another area that calls for further exploration.

Organization of the Book

This book contains ten chapters. Chapter One provides a brief introduction to the study, focusing on the significance of this research project. It describes the focus of the study,

research problems, questions and the methodology. It explains that there is limited information about the nature of interaction between development partners, and about the applicability of participatory approaches to socio-cultural contexts. It demonstrates that there is insufficient understanding of ways of involving communities in designing projects and building effective and representative organizations, and of the most competent strategies towards improving development practices. The chapter concludes by detailing the organization of the book and the contents of each chapter.

Chapter Two focuses on the research methodology used to investigate participation as a phenomenon. This chapter provides a detailed description of the fieldwork experience, and the participatory methods employed to gather data and involve the respondents as active participants. It showed how various participatory research methods, especially the focus group discussions that followed the PRA sessions, could bring people together to allow them to present their views and values and interpret their own personal choices. The chapter also highlights the ethical issues considered by the researcher to protect the rights of all parties involved, as well as the limitations encountered.

Chapter Three provides the theoretical framework of the research topic. It offers an overview of development theory and the emergence of alternative development approaches, and traces the history of participation in relation to development. It discusses the emergence of participation into prominence within theories of alternative development. This chapter examines the meanings and objectives of participation and outlines the main concepts concerned in participatory development, such as the importance of local knowledge in

implementation of development programs in developing countries. It concludes by introducing the recent theories of participation that focus on building relationships between local people and development and service providers

Chapter Four illustrates the concerns of development communities regarding the practices of participatory development. Accordingly, it explores the issues that surround the concept of participation in practice. It is possible that arrangements in practice might be different from that described in the literature of projects; therefore, this chapter examines the role and impact of development providers, professionals and local community organizations. It highlights the areas of women's involvement in development, along with the influence of local cultures. This chapter makes reference to the limitations of both empirical studies and literature on popular participation in development projects in Sudan, as well as on indigenous participatory values, structures and practices in different contexts.

Chapter Five entails background information about Sudan and introduces Sudan's journey towards development. It discusses the political changes that have emerged since its independence in 1956 and the nature of government efforts to achieve development. It also examines the role of civil society organizations in contributing to development processes. This chapter offers a framework for understanding the conditions that affect the outcomes of development interventions at grassroots levels.

Chapter Six provides a full report of the secondary case study, the White Nile Agricultural Services Project (WNASP). This explores the participatory approaches and mechanisms employed by the WNASP to implement development and

encourage people's involvement. The focus of this chapter is to identify the factors that influenced the nature and extent of popular participation and to examine the strategies of development organizations regarding the issue of sustainability. Sustainability, which is crucial to any development intervention, is examined as a concept. This chapter also provides further understanding of local power dynamics.

Chapters Seven and Eight give an account of the major case study, the North Kordofan Rural Development Project (NKRDP). Chapter Seven introduces the NKRDP and the local communities residing in North Kordofan state. It explores the nature of relationships between field workers and senior project staff. It examines, in depth, the norms and institutions of participation which the people of North Kordofan employed to generate change in their lives. Despite the negative images typically surrounding government authorities, Chapter Seven demonstrates that in North Kordofan state there was a shift in the perception of government professionals, the result of which initiated new participatory structures at various administrative levels. These structures accorded opportunities for collaboration between development providers, facilitators and local communities, and provided the foundation for addressing the challenges of participatory development in North Kordofan State, while serving as an example to other areas within Sudan.

Chapter Eight examines the approaches and mechanisms of the North Kordofan Rural Development Project and how local communities viewed and interacted with its interventions. It explores the relationships between the project and parties such as the government, financial institutions and non-governmental organizations. It highlights the outcomes of the project and the attitudes of its staff towards dealing with the

only national NGO that worked in the area. It also discusses the organizational and management structures of the project and the impact of these on internal and external interactions between stakeholders. Regarding outcomes, Chapter Eight demonstrates that the project was designed without consulting local people. It also provides evidences on how the particular approaches employed by the project have hindered the participation of the poorest in society.

Chapter Nine discusses the overarching themes represented by the major findings of this study. These themes include: development providers' policies and credibility; the behavior of professionals; power relations; the formation of community organizations; and gender issues and local cultures. It analyzes these themes in relation to their contribution to wider discussion on participatory development theories. These themes foster understanding of the focus and approaches employed by development providers, the behavior and input of professionals, and the impact of local power relations and cultures.

Chapter Ten presents a summary of the research findings. In this respect, I do not assert that these findings are universally relevant, but that they may be applicable to other Sudanese socio-cultural settings and can help to understand or investigate similar aspects in other contexts. The chapter concludes with the implications of the study for development practices in Sudan and proposes areas that require further research.

2

Research Methods and Fieldwork Experience

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to provide a description of the researcher's fieldwork experiences and describe the design of the research and data collection methods. The chapter begins by describing the conditions that influenced the selection of the case studies. It introduces the research participants and describes the analysis and reporting processes. This chapter further presents the ethical issues which arise, outlines the limitations of the study, and concludes with a brief summary.

Case Study Strategy

A case study is an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real life context (Yin, 2003:13) particularly when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident. Therefore, I decided to use a case study as my research strategy. Most literature on case study strategies agree that this approach is based on a great wealth of empirical knowledge and entails all of the following actions: 'describing, understanding and explaining' (Hamel et al., 1991:39). A case study is much like 'detective work with everything weighed and sifted, checked or corroborated' (Gillham, 2000:30). It 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 strategy offered in-depth description, understanding 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 associated grassroots organizations, 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 referred to as 'an embedded case study'. The case studies also helped me, as well as the research respondents, to identify factors which influenced the quality of participation and the development processes. The case studies allowed opportunity to elicit the meanings of local values, and the motives and roles of local participatory organizations and practices. They also paved the way for inspiring ideas and identifying mechanisms for improving participatory development practices.

I chose Sudan as the field in which to conduct my work as I am originally Sudanese and have had previous working experience with development agencies, government, and local NGOs in Sudan. To explore the concepts and practices of participation as adopted by project management, as well as to examine inter-agency links and their relationships to local communities, I required access to the documents, participants and technical staff of each project. Arrangements and contacts were established to obtain permission from local authorities, implementing agencies and the project management staff. I sought permission to become involved in the North Kordofan project; prior to conducting fieldwork, I contacted international development agencies such as the FAO, IFAD, CARE, USAID and the World Bank. The only projects on-going since the mid-

1990s were being 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 granted their permission and indicated interest in having me as a researcher and participant observer in the project sites. They also confirmed the interest and consent of local communities and government institutions. It was a great relief to obtain that permission, as there were a limited number of development projects in Sudan to choose from, because development agencies had withdrawn from Sudan in the early 1990s, claiming that the government supported terrorism and/or would not cooperate with international financial institutions.

IFAD-CCU also provided me with unrestricted electronic material, which delineated the policies and strategies of their projects in operation in Sudan. I reviewed this material and chose the North Kordofan Rural Development Project (NKRDP) to conduct my research. The selection of the NKRDP was influenced by the following factors: the availability of development projects that could provide an appropriate case for studying participatory development processes in a real setting; and the attainment of permission from the local authorities and implementing agencies who are the primary actors in these processes. The NKRDP has relatively extensive experience in operation in comparison to other projects. The local communities covered by it represent a majority of the Sudanese ethnic groups and it has had diverse experiences with aid and international development organizations since the mid-1980s. I accessed the websites of IFAD and the NKRDP and downloaded the evaluation mission report, which was released in 2003. All of these documents

were carefully examined, particularly these devoted to participation issues.

While I was in the field, the IFAD-Central Coordination Unit (IFAD-CCU) and many development specialists and academics suggested that I should visit and explore the White Nile Agricultural Services Project (WNASP) which was also implemented by IFAD. The WNASP was phased out in 2001 and 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 current IFAD projects benefited from the lessons and experiences of the WNASP, while others viewed the WNASP as an example of development projects that typically collapse after the withdrawal of external technical and financial assistance. While I was undertaking fieldwork in the NKRDP, the Forests National Corporation (my former employer) facilitated the obtaining of permission from the MAAI and local authorities in the White Nile State who allowed me to visit the WNASP sites. There, I had the opportunity to meet and interview the professionals, local leaders and participants involved. Exploring WNASP presented an opportunity to study the dynamics of power within irrigation schemes in which farmers' organizations are perceived as semi-formal organizations with resources and relationships with government authorities. I believed that this case study would broaden understanding of the Sudanese context and create some degree of generalization since there are some similarities between the two cases and other regions in terms of development interventions and prevailing cultural and socio-economic conditions. The Forests National Corporation (FNC) provided 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. After reviewing the WNASP reports I decided to study the community development component of the project, 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.

Useful Events

I spent the first two weeks of my fieldwork in Khartoum, which was extremely useful as it enabled me to meet with many people. I conducted a series of focus group discussions and semi-structured interviews with IFAD coordination unit staff; government officials; academics at the Institute of Research and Development Studies (DSRI) and Faculty of Agriculture, University of Khartoum; the United Nations Development Program (UNDP); and members of civil society organizations. I also reviewed relevant material from universities and the specialized institutes at the University of Khartoum, such as the Institute of Asian and African Studies (IAAS) and DSRI. Useful material was obtained from the UNDP and Sudanese libraries, the Federal Rule Chamber and the Gender Centre for Research and Training (GCRT). I was also provided with documents and reports of the NKRDP and the WNASP from IFAD-CCU and the Ministry of Agriculture in Kordofan and the White Nile States.

I had the opportunity to attend two national workshops. Immediately after arriving in Sudan I was informed by a friend that a two-day workshop would be organized by the Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry and an invitation was issued for my attendance. The workshop was coordinated in response to an expression of interest from an international

organization in resuming its activities in Sudan and subsequent request for project proposals. The workshop aimed to present and assess the previous experiences of development agencies such as the World Bank, the Danish International Development Agency (DANIDA), the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and SOS Sahel International/ United Kingdom, which had withdrawn their programs in the early 1990s. The workshop was attended by academics, NGO activists and development practitioners with working experience in development projects. These participants reflected on the lessons learned and offered suggestions for future projects in order to facilitate the Federal Ministry's preparation of project proposals that could be funded by government and international organizations. The second workshop was organized by the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), which sought input from civil society organizations regarding the Millennium Development Goals. This workshop opened avenues for me to meet with and listen to NGO activists and journalists debating the role of national NGOs, and to acquire greater knowledge of current civil society movements and development trends in Sudan. Both occasions were valuable opportunities to meet potential research participants, who expressed their interest in the research topic and provided ideas and information; significantly, they identified other persons and institutions which could serve as possible resources for my research.

While I was in the North Kordofan state (NKS), one of the North Kordofan NGOs organized a regional one-day seminar in El-Obeid (the capital of NKS) in collaboration with UNDP. The seminar was attended by representatives from international development agencies and regional non-

governmental organizations operating in the state. This seminar provided me with valuable information regarding the regional NGOs active in the area, the scope and nature of their work, and the relationships between these organizations, grassroots organizations, government institutions and the NKRDP.

Undertaking the fieldwork required extensive knowledge of the historical and cultural background of the research sites and phenomenon under study. For this reason, considerable time was spent reviewing 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 and academic staff of both institutes offered their support and suggestions. During this time, I invited several development practitioners and academics with significant knowledge of and experience with development agencies and projects to participate in a pilot study.

Pilot Studies

A number of pilot interviews were conducted in order to test the questions and structure of the interviews. The pilot studies were designed to discover whether the interview questions were clear and comprehensible, and whether the length of the interviews and their findings would generate surplus 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 at the University of Khartoum also volunteered to participate in semi-structured interviews. Through these pilot studies the

volunteers were able to represent the existent project staff, development planners and specialists. The participants were encouraged to comment on the efficacy of the interview questions and these discussions were recorded and used for further amendments.

From the pilot survey, an interview timeframe was estimated and a brief analysis of the pilot results was carried out to assess the outcomes and to discern ideas that might be worth incorporating into the main research (Schofield, 1969). The participants of the pilot studies proposed that greater emphasis and in-depth analysis be undertaken of several issues. The first issue was related to project communication channels and their tools for extending communication to rural communities, as the pilot participants showed concern about the initial approach of projects towards communicating with local communities. It appears that to ensure local community participation the community must be approached through the correct channels to avoid creating conflicts and/or excluding some groups while further empowering those who are already powerful. Another issue was the need for in-depth examination of local participatory organizations and practices. It appeared that these organizations have crucial roles in sustaining local livelihoods and could influence externally imposed development interventions.

After two weeks in Khartoum, I accompanied the NKRDP staff to the site of the project's implementation in North Kordofan State. The project was located in central Sudan, along the way to the Western region. It was an eight-hour drive from Khartoum, journeying alongside the White Nile towards the south before crossing the Nile and heading west to El-Obeid. During the trip a comprehensive discussion

with the project staff accorded me useful information about the project's participants and the nature of their work, which saved much time and introduced their thoughts regarding my fieldwork plans. Being at the project sites from July to November was the perfect time for conducting fieldwork in the North Kordofan and White Nile States. This period of the year offered the opportunity to meet the seasonal migrants (almost all young men) who return to their villages during the rainy season to join their families and engage in farming operations, which usually culminate in harvesting and selling agricultural products during the months of November and December. These migrants typically leave the villages and enter the cities to work to support their families during the dry season from January to June. Chambers (1983: 13/20-21) points out that rural poverty cannot be observed if fieldwork or visits are conducted during a time when social problems are less prevalent and evident, for example during the dry season. Chambers (1983:20) refers to researchers who avoid the wet season in order to escape related seasonal 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 the timing of visits throughout the year should take into account the accessibility of information and the objectives of fieldwork and visits, as opposed to insisting on a particular time to avoid personal difficulties or seasonal bias. The question is whether the dry season or wet season is the most suitable time to access sources of information. Finding an answer requires obtaining appropriate information before starting 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 Africa's longest, fifty-year civil war. As a result of this agreement all major development agencies, such as the World Bank and other international NGOs, resumed their activities in Sudan. This change afforded opportunities to attend workshops and meetings organized by different international and national institutions, with the aim of reviewing contemporary development challenges and evaluating previous development programs and projects. During the last two years, Sudan has witnessed a great revolution in mobile telephone technology, which now extends to most rural areas. Surprisingly, even illiterate people in remote rural areas are aware of and have learnt how to use this technology. In Sudan, people are generally not very punctual and need to be reminded of their appointments; resultantly this new technology assisted in confirming and reminding participants of our appointments. Public transport between villages can be problematic in Sudan, so establishing interview times could be quite difficult. The mobile phone was a timesaver in these circumstances.

Sudanese Settings

The Sudanese people, especially those in the villages, enjoy talking in informal contexts. Social interaction through verbal channels between locals, and between locals and outsiders, is always considered to be gratifying. People typically engage in conversation pertaining to various topics. Having many friends and ex-colleagues working in government institutions facilitated my field visits and provided me with more information about individuals, institutions, and NGOs which I might glean greater information from. The existence of

universities and research institutions in the area of the NKRDP site also provided access to more resources.

In general, Sudanese people are unconcerned about individual privacy; any one might volunteer the phone numbers of those whom he or she thinks could be of use. People rarely get upset if you arrive without a previous appointment or arrangement. While interviewing one of the key government officers I discovered that he was supposed to be chairing a meeting with a community organization at that time. I proposed my willingness to wait until he had finished or else to arrange another time, but he refused and insisted that I finish the interview while the others wait. This happened many times, which explains why people find it difficult to be punctual or precise with time management.

At the village level, some social practices such as *Nafir* (mobilization of the community to undertake collective work) and women's coffee groups provided an open forum to participate and mix with locals through enjoyable and valuable social events. Through these forums I gained intimate knowledge of the organizations, values, and morals of indigenous participatory practices. I developed a manageable and flexible strategy during my fieldwork, taking advantage of all opportunities and listening to all those interested in talking to me openly. I entered the field with little knowledge of a variety of areas, so advanced with sensitivity gained from my previous learning and awareness of my role as a participant observer.

Living in the Rural Settings

The NKRDP staff facilitated the transport between towns and villages when it was difficult to find public transport

during the rainy season; on some days the roads were inaccessible, and furthermore people rarely travelled, being engaged on their farms. The NKRDP also provided accommodation in the large cities (El-Obeid, Bara and UmRuwaba) where I spent valuable time with the field staff.

The communities in the NKRDP sites (Bara and UmRuwaba localities) are from the same ethnic background. Sometimes one tribe may make up a village, but often a combination of tribes exist in each village, usually living in harmony and mixing with each other through marriages and social interactions. Due to strong social and blood relationships, people are continuously moving within their local communities. People in each village have extensive knowledge of other villages, including the problems which exist there, who visits there, and the nature of their relationship with the state government and external development agencies.

A visitor such as me, with no relatives or friends in the area is seen as a village guest, so all those possessing a visitors' room in their house offered to have me stay there. In the early morning, women from neighboring houses would bring their morning tea to share with the family hosting me. It was then that my workday began. The members of Village Development Organizations (VDOs), schoolteachers and the host families contributed to my work by contacting potential participants, organizing group discussions and/or accompanying me to my destination. Everyone was willing to help, and no one instituted rules or conditions that could restrict my movement and my communication with anyone at any time. The intensive interaction between people in villages rendered it very easy to meet people from other communities who were on the move,

either carrying out farm work, visiting friends or relatives, or participating in social events.

My willingness to stay with people in their villages and join them while they worked on their farms, in their kitchens and when they gathered to drink coffee, created a sense of ease for the villagers and myself. People felt free to express their views and ideas and share personal experiences. Living among rural villagers helped me gain first-hand insights into the perceptions, values and motives that influence people's participation in development interventions, and enabled us to collectively discuss ways of enhancing the outcomes of local participatory development processes. Women normally gather to drink coffee in groups, usually with relatives, friends and neighbors. They share food, chat, exchange news, and discuss general topics. Coffee groups hold more significance than just the act of drinking coffee together; they are a forum for relaxation and reflection and a venue for storytellers and poets to express themselves. Productive ideas and proposals such as saving fund activities are normally discussed and disseminated from coffee groups. It was thus useful to utilize existing groups to meet many people, as these provided groups which were already in place and met at a time guaranteed to suit their members. The existence of these groups offered a chance to conduct focus group discussions, although additional joint focus group discussions were held for both men and women. Before initiating discussion on the research topic we always engaged in friendly, general discussion regarding village life and social issues.

People expressed great pleasure at my presence among them. They expressed interest regarding my previous work experience, my home village in the Gazira Scheme in Sudan,

and my life in New Zealand. On my last day with each community we organized an evening gathering to present my findings and to have a final open discussion. Comments from participants at these events served to make corrections and edit findings. This practice proved useful in validating the research findings.

Residing within the premises of the project's operation encouraged the field staff to open up and speak honestly about their experiences, successes, failures, hopes and frustrations with the NKRDP. However, both management and technical senior staff were a little conservative and focused on presenting the positive aspects. This is understandable as the senior staff were directly employed by IFAD and enjoyed better work benefits and services, while the field staff were government employees who worked temporarily for the project. Attending meetings between the NKRDP, Village Development Organizations (VDOs) and local communities in many villages provided me with further knowledge about the project's approaches, inputs and shortcomings. These meetings allowed locals to reflect on the outcomes of the project's interventions. Meetings were normally held at night when everyone had finished work, in the open air under large gas lamps.

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

Having described the conditions that influenced my fieldwork experiences and selection of case studies, the next section describes the research participants and various research methods.

General Framework

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

Research Participants

The research participants belonged to either of the following groups: specialists with knowledge of participation in development, or those among the grassroots who were either excluded by or involved in project activities or willing to talk (Appendix 2.1). With the help of the NKRDP staff, government institutions in the White Nile State, and members of grassroots organizations, a number of individuals and groups were identified and invited to participate. Seven villages were selected in the NKRDP in which to conduct in-depth research,

while two schemes in the WNASP were selected; selection was based on villages' responses and the degree of their involvement in the project's interventions.

At national and local levels, there were local specialists with extensive knowledge of various issues related to the research topic (Dhamotharan, 1998). These 'specialists' provided valuable information regarding indigenous participatory practices, concepts, and beliefs, along with the historical background of these. They also explained how communities responded when faced with the crises of drought, famine and fire.

Local 'participation champions' (World Bank, 2001a: 3) from the Popular Development Works (PDW) who had initiated participatory programs and activities in the NKRDP sites were also interviewed, to enable me to explore their policies and perceptions and examine the NKRDP approach when dealing with regional and national NGOs.

The research participants responded with spontaneous enthusiasm, eager to share their problems, hopes and experiences concerning development projects, government institutions and NGOs. They enjoyed recounting narratives from the past and the present. Many participants, especially in the villages, possessed the ability to relate these experiences as poetry. This offered explanation of how people were able to recollect many events in great detail, even those which occurred before they were born.

Reaching the Inaccessible

Realizing that some people are more accessible than others turned my attention towards potentially inaccessible individuals or groups. The basic assumption in any

participatory development program is that the proposed initiatives will target the poor. This was implied in both the NKRDP and the WNASP documents. However, many authors point out that the poor and marginalized groups are hard to reach in most cases (Gillham, 2000; Chambers, 1997). For the purpose of this research, reaching these inaccessible groups was crucial to validating evidence from those supposedly the targets of development projects and from whom development must seek genuine participation. It appeared that the poorest of the poor were largely uninvolved and typically absent from the projects' meetings and/or activities. During one of the NKRDP's meetings (Field notes, *Bara*), which was coordinated to discuss the lack of women's participation in the Agricultural Bank of Sudan's credit program, a female widow with seven children raised a vital point in asserting 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 prompted awareness of certain forms of exclusion and directed my attention to others deprived of such development opportunities.

The Sampling Frame

Sampling ensures that any technique used for collecting data forms an accurate representation of people within the population (Wadsworth, 1997). Sample size is considered important 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 methods 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 organizations

(GROs) and government officials, as well as other identified participants external to the project, such as academics, planners and members of NGOs .

The non-random sampling represents the main frame for the survey, which was found to be useful in an exploratory study when utilizing a purposive sampling design. The selection of those interviewed, such as the project staff, representatives of implementing agencies, members of grassroots organizations (GROs) and the poorest community members excluded by the projects, was undertaken according to 'known characteristics' (May, 1997:119). The members of GROs such as educational, religious and popular committees; women's groups such as coffee groups, which included women from both rich and poor categories; and project participants and non-participants, were also interviewed through focus group discussions.

The snowball sampling technique assists in finding and contacting the initial participants, which, in accordance with the scope and focus of the study, leads to the participation of others (May, 1997). This technique was extremely effective in accessing potential participants who were selected according to their knowledge of, experience with, involvement in, and influence on participatory development processes. It also helped to approach those who were not included on the NKRDP's list to be interviewed. The data collection process was continued until it appeared that no further information could be obtained, meaning that the sample size was only known on completion of the fieldwork. Table 2.1 shows the final sample size by sites, methods, participants and institutions.

The NKRDP adopted the same approaches and implemented the same activities in all villages it operated in. It has been indicated that some villages responded immediately upon being approached by the project, while some resisted the project and took a long time to become fully involved. Out of the two villages that applied for involvement in the project and agreed to the project conditions, one was selected for the purposes of conducting an in-depth investigation, along with six others. 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 on account of specific conditions, such as a community 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 throughout the schemes, which experienced widespread similarities in terms of socio-economic and environmental conditions. All the schemes had similar local organizations, with the only significant difference being the scheme's population structure; as regards tribal identity, some were homogenous, while others were heterogeneous. Based on the population structure the schemes could be divided into these two demographic-based categories, and one from each category was randomly selected for an in-depth analysis of the project's approaches and outcomes.

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

Selection of Research Methods

To explore the various factors that influence people's participation in community development and thus in project interventions, the selection of appropriate methods is required. This is dependent on the subject of the study, the context of the research and the kind of information being explored. Factoring in this, the qualitative methods can be considered to be the primary approach. Although the study is of a highly qualitative nature, a great deal of statistical data was gathered from document sources and other field methods, such as rankings of well-being and historical profiles.

The data was collected from different primary and secondary sources, and by using this two-track method and reviewing the literature, I attempted to establish what was already known about the topic, what was missing, and what was required to obtain new information or supporting evidence (Gillham, 2000). Before travelling to Sudan, I reviewed a number of relevant electronic publications, which provided useful information about development issues in Sudan. These documents were successful in offering information which was required to respond to some issues related to the research question, such as the extent of participation and the projects' participatory methods, inputs, and achievements. Detailed records of activities and participants were provided by IFAD-Central Coordination Unit and the NKRDP monitoring system. These secondary sources also guided me towards further questions to be raised (May, 1997). Data on participation in credit and literacy programs was useful in investigating the impact of interventions and the perceptions of development participants and non-participants towards these. The data also

helped in conducting in-depth investigations and conceptualizing interpretations.

Development projects usually provide substantial documentation of their design, activities, sites and stakeholders, in the form of studies, surveys, work plans and consultations, and periodic, progress and evaluation reports. IFAD and related institutions, such as the Ministry of Agriculture, made available all periodic and evaluation reports, documents and consultations of the NKRDP and the WNASP for examination for the purposes 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.

Primary Data

The design of a data collection protocol was guided by the research questions and a review of the literature. Because participation is a multi-dimensional concept, different techniques were employed to allow participants flexibility in addressing the issues raised in various ways. The research methods strived to obtain first-hand knowledge of the phenomenon under study by combining responses from interviews, participant observation, and Participatory Rural Appraisal methods.

Interviews yielded rich insight into people's experiences, opinions, aspirations, and feelings (May, 1997:109). I found the interview approach useful when there was a need for general descriptive information (ODA, 1995). Participants' statements about events were carefully assessed to confirm whether or not they were a reasonably accurate record (Whyte, 1984). The projects' stakeholders and others

influenced or affected by development interventions were identified. All the research participants were contacted and involved in face-to-face conversation. The research topic was discussed in-depth, guided by focus group discussions and the semi-structured interviews which accompanied PRA 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 undertaken when dealing with the development academics, planners and NGOs activists. I spent time getting to know the participants and ensuring they understood the questions, therefore face-to-face interviews enhanced my investigation by attempting to ensure the accuracy of information. An interview with one participant lasted for an average of one hour.

Questionnaires relied on structured interviews to collect data and each participant answered the same set of questions (May, 1997:110). This method permitted comparability between participants' responses. Apparently, structured interviews are unsuitable for communities where illiteracy is prevalent, as this method cannot realistically reflect people's personal perceptions, therefore these were used to a very limited extent, mainly to collect data from and explore the views of the NKRDP technical and field staff. When utilized 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 directly and indirectly related to their engagement with communities. These interviews supplied information concerning their qualifications, experiences and personal opinions on particular issues such as participation,

plans to involve people in project activities, factors that influenced the participatory processes, and the sustainability of implemented activities. Appendix 2.2 lists the structured-interview questions.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted among a wide range of people. While allowing the participants to answer the questions on their own terms, I asked them to be concise and to clarify their answers when required. This technique was used to interview fifty-nine participants, including project managers and staff and representatives of various agencies, who were queried about the policies of development agencies and the strategies, perspectives, objectives and plans of projects. The same technique was used to interview the members of community organizations and certain distinguished community members such as male and female elders. Semi-structured interviews were also conducted with locals, whether or they participated in the projects. The in-depth interviews assisted in clarifying and validating people's observations. Some of these locals were also observed in action or when they participated in the NKRDP's meetings. If it appeared that people had additional thoughts they wished to express, they were invited to a semi-structured interview. These interviews were conducted in an unforced and relaxed environment. For project staff this took the form of the office or guest houses, while rural communities had no preferred venue, simply choosing to be interviewed wherever they were available, such as in schools, farms, houses, public places like 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 concepts and concerns of potential participants' (planners, decision-makers, theorists and local figures) regarding participatory development were explored, as I was aware that 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 attempted to keep the conversation away from evaluative themes 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 to be one of the most valuable tools of the research investigation. According to Kassam (1997) such discussions help to gain a deeper understanding of the dynamics of participants' values and perspectives. It enriches the quantified data obtained through structured and semi-structured interviews and file review. The focus group forum promotes a comfortable atmosphere for the disclosure of ideas, experiences, and attitudes about a topic (Krueger and Casey, 2000). I utilized the term 'focus group discussion' instead of 'focus group interview', because it is more acceptable and common when translated into Arabic (*Magmuat Negash*). Focus group discussions served to acquire background information about the topic, stimulate new concepts, reveal impressions of the programs, activities and organizations, facilitate the interpretation of previously collected data, and identify the problems and constraints of the new programs (Stewart and Shamdasani, 1990:12). The participants of development processes were considered as central subjects and actors in those processes; they were therefore given the opportunity to use their own words and preferred style of expression to present their views.

In order to create an environment in which participants felt comfortable to elaborate on the outcomes of projects, many focus group discussions were organized drawing from a variety of existing groups, such as projects' technical unit staff, field staff, members of Village Development Organizations (VDOs), GROs, members of women's coffee groups, members of *Sandug* and both project participants and non-participants. In the villages of the NKRDP site, the VDOs had a list of households of those identified as project participants and those who were not. From this list a number of participants were selected, and meetings were held in the school or the community development centre. After introducing the topic, the participants were invited to discuss the issues related to the research topic on their own terms, and to express themselves as freely as possible.

At the national level, especially in Khartoum state, a series of focus group discussions were conducted, and participants from different cultural backgrounds, professionals, and academics (White and Pettit, 2004) were invited to speak openly about participatory development and other related issues. The selected topics were introduced and covered systematically and the questions were designed and directed in an unbiased way. After introducing the topics I ensured that the discussion remained focused on the identified issues. Thirty-three focus group discussions were conducted, each group engaging eight to twelve individuals over a period of approximately one and a half to two hours (Stewart and Shamdasani, 1990:10). In both the unstructured interviews and focus group discussions, the 'reflecting back method' was employed to allow the participants to return to and elaborate upon previous points and correct or modify their statements,

also enabling 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 enhance their answers (Whyte, 1984).

The focus group discussions were usually followed by refreshments 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 focus group. Further comments or modifications were invited before the 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 villages.

Interest in participatory methods resulted in an increase in the 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. According to Evans (2003:1) we must ponder not only 'what kind of methods we use' but also 'what are the purposes and values they promote?' The ethics of this study were guided by the philosophy of participation. Therefore participatory methods, especially PRA techniques and focus group discussions, were employed intensively for data collection. PRA methods helped to develop a good rapport with the community and 'triangulation' was the key to their success (John et al., 1992:98).

PRAs consist of a set of techniques which gather specific information. For the purpose of this research, some of the PRA techniques were used to collect the required data as well as involve the respondents as active participants in the research. These techniques enabled local people to create diagrams and maps using symbols, which helped them to explain and modify their data. Thus, PRA methods not only generated data, but enabled communities to analyze their own. Communities in North Kordofan State, especially Bara and *UmRuwaba*, had prior experience and knowledge of Participatory Rural Appraisal methods (PRAs), as they were used by the NKRDP in its baseline surveys conducted prior to implementing activities. I was interested in using wealth ranking techniques, as in most development projects, The main objective was improving the living conditions, livelihoods or well-being of the poor. As with the projects under study, the immediate objectives were to improve the living conditions of targeted communities. I decided to use this technique to examine the projects' contribution to realizing improvements. As we discussed wealth and wellbeing in one of the focus group discussions in *Bara 1*, one participant made a suggestion: 'let us select three people who can sit here, and identify the families according to their wealth.' I proposed comparing the wealth ranking for the community prior to the commencement of the NKRDP with the present-day ranking to observe whether any households had moved from one category to another as a result of their participation. The participants gave the task much consideration, listened carefully, and organized themselves to undertake it. They placed the names of households on cards and sorted them into different categories according to their living conditions. After categorizing all households based on their wealth, they presented their criteria for making these

classifications. The rest of the members listened carefully and made suggestions or corrections before achieving unanimous agreement on the final rankings. In order to avoid any distortions created by the potential reluctance of some participants to rank themselves, as Chambers (1997:143) points out, two separate groups (men, women or mixed) were organized to conduct the task.

The Decision Tree is another PRA technique, which illustrates the sustainability of the different project activities as perceived by its participants. Using this method, the participants theorized which activities were likely to continue after assistance to the project had stopped, and explained the justifications behind their thinking. Venn diagrams were 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 each (John et al., 1992). This technique was selected on account of its ability to examine the relationships between community organizations and the project, agencies representing the locality, state institutions, and other private, regional and national organizations, including those who were anticipated to be future partners.

Historical profiles were also used. This method had the advantage of benefitting from the input of the elders among the community. The use of historical profiles helped to identify previous historical events which entailed collective community responses. The participants were able to identify events as far back as the year 1906, when the famous Sudanese famine occurred. They continually recalled this event by saying, 'let us start from the 1906 famine.' Most people had memorized the history of their villages, which was preserved by the sharing of

poems, stories and proverbs. These methods are useful in a culture of verbal tradition because they allow people to memorize the dates, actions, circumstances and outcomes that accompanied significant events. Sometimes people remembered particular events in association with other prominent ones, such as the changing of a political regime or a famous famine like that which occurred in the region in 1984. Local language always reveals a great deal about history and values. During semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions, the participants shared and explained their local community's folk culture, songs, poetry and proverbs, all of which represented local values and beliefs surrounding participation. Through the history profile technique the participants narrated their communities' experiences and responses at times of difficulty, hardship and joy.

The PRA results were analyzed through open discussion. During the discussion the participants contributed additional information and comments, and analyzed and corrected each other. They also attempted interpretations of their criteria and choices. This generated new insights and opened channels for thinking empathically and collectively about the reasons behind community problems, the unexpected outcomes of interventions, and the best possible amendments and solutions. During mixed PRA sessions and focus group discussions in the NKRDP sites, men and women usually sat in two separate groups, either facing each other in situations of 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, elderly women generally displayed confidence in speaking up and publicly contradicting issues by

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

Observation as part of a multi-method approach is central to the case study method which generates 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, but may in fact participate in different events within the case studies (Yin, 2003:93-94). Observing interaction between the NKRDP staff and communities, and the role of leadership, power relations and representation within the community appeared to be of great value. Community interaction and participation in decision-making, shaping agendas, putting forward ideas, taking action, and leading, supporting or opposing proposals, all assisted me in establishing links between these phenomena and the project documents, policies, structures of social organizations and gender differences. Many semi-structured interviews were guided by my observations of the actions of participants in the NKRDP and in community affairs. During interviews, these participants were asked to explain their actions and perceptions. Overall I conducted 20 structured interviews, 59 semi-structured interviews, 15 focus interviews, 33 focus group discussions and organised 30 participatory rural appraisal sessions.

I kept research diaries to take and revise extensive notes on interesting observations and particular events in both projects to consider whether further interviewing and reading

were required. The following section explains how the collected data was recorded and validated.

Recording and Quality of Data Collection

There are three options when recording interviews and discussions: 1) tape-recording; 2) taking notes as the interview or discussion progresses, and writing up a detailed report later; and 3) making notes after the interview has terminated, then writing or dictating a report later. Preference was always given to tape-recording, if acceptable to the participants, as this could focus solely on the conversation and allow notes to be taken on the non-verbal points. Tape recording also provides a complete and accurate record of what has been discussed. The field experience showed that tape recording was only efficient and useful when used in semi-structured and unstructured interviews, when interviewing only one participant at a time and when it could be ensured of no noise interference. It was impossible to use tape-recording during PRA sessions or focus group discussions as more than one person could be speaking at once. All 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 exceptions was a former Minister and an activist in a national NGO, 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 government intervention in the election of the Farmers' Union. The tape recordings provided me with all the recorded material required, although the transcription of interviews was time-consuming. However, by limiting the recording to only the points requiring direct documentation and organizing my time efficiently, I was able to do most of the transcription before leaving Sudan.

Writing and Reviewing Field Notes

Keeping a personal notebook was a valuable way of recording ideas, insights, and questions to be asked at a later time, the names of people to approach, and notes regarding copies of reports or lists of participants I required (Gillham, 2000:21). It was useful to record and continually review notes on a daily basis. I also registered my observations and questions for further investigation without jumping to conclusions or making initial personal interpretations. My notes also included people's comments, responses, questions and the context in which these were raised. The continuous reviewing of field notes provided on-going guidance and data.

I established a weekly program for reading, reviewing and preparing a summary of the main findings. This helped to identify what was lacking and what was required before I left the site (village). I transcribed recorded material on a daily basis, edited the written observations and highlighted the main findings that directly contributed to the research questions. Each week I prepared a weekly work plan that included the proposed activities for each day, themes or topics yet to be investigated, and any community groups or officials not yet contacted or included.

Taking notes also provided greater and more accurate information than could be captured by memory. It added a sense of formality, especially for those participants who were pleased to find their discussion would be recorded (Whyte, 1984). I noticed that several participants purposely spoke slowly to ensure that what they said had been clearly recorded. After each interview and PRA session I found it very useful to note down comments regarding the participants' behavior and responses and any other points requiring further investigation.

A documentation sheet was adapted from Flick (2002) for this purpose and is reproduced in Appendix 2.3.

To guarantee the reliability of the research data, I employed different methods to provide triangulation, which strengthens confidence in the research results. 'Triangulation' refers to the combination of different methods, study groups, settings and different theoretical perspectives to address a phenomenon (Flick, 2002:226). Data was cross-checked by querying several participants about the same events in order to evaluate the existing data, correct errors and deepen understanding (Whyte, 1984). Research findings were also presented to the research participants before leaving the sites. This assisted in making corrections and accommodating the participants' comments.

My knowledge of local dialects (spoken Arabic) helped me to elicit the meanings of responses. It saved much time and accorded valuable opportunities for in-depth interviews and conversations with different groups. I considered this knowledge, and to some extent my familiarity with the socio-cultural environments, to be a source of strength which enabling a deep understanding of communities. Due to 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 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 degree. This raises the challenge of becoming 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 the questions posed. This concept was at the forefront of my consciousness, so I

continuously sought objectivity. I found it useful to be constantly aware of my role as a researcher to keep the issue of validity in my focus.

Having explained the various processes culminating in the compilation of data, the next section explains how the collected data was processed and analyzed.

Data Reduction and Analysis

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

The processing of data began in the field with the transcription of tape recordings and by undertaking content analysis, which involved taking each transcription in turn, reviewing its contents, highlighting substantive statements and ignoring any irrelevant material, repetitions or digressions (Gillham, 2000). In 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 of the content and value of the data was developed. Subsequently, a criterion for selectivity was adopted. The highlighted statements were then grouped into different categories under a topic heading that coincided with the research questions and main themes. I reviewed the list of identified categories, read it repeatedly, and

developed new layouts by combining similar categories and separating others, reaffirming the proposed headings, and making any other changes necessary for clarity before undertaking interpretation.

With regard to analysis, there are several suggestions about how data can be analyzed, but there is no one rule for doing so (Burgess, 1989). In general, there are five techniques for analyzing case studies: pattern matching, explanation building, time series analysis, and logic model and cross-case synthesis. Pattern matching techniques were employed because of their relevance to explanatory case studies (Yin, 2003:109). Data analysis was carried out through constant comparative methods, using classification and identification of relationships. During the processes of analysis there was an on-going effort to integrate and link the categories. Carrying out analysis while in the field maintained the continuousness of the process of data collection, as further additional questions were raised and subsequently, more data was collected to fill the gaps. Regarding statistical analysis, some of the quantitative data was retrieved from the records of the projects and community organizations, in addition to the data generated using PRA methods.

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

Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations comprise a set of guiding values that scientists in all disciplines are obliged to follow. These are concerned with what is right and just in the interests of all

parties (May, 1997:54). In accordance with this requirement, the Massey University Code of Ethical Conduct for Research was adhered to. My research was classified as low-risk as the potential harm to participants was not significant. Prior to undertaking fieldwork I obtained ethical clearance from the Massey University Ethics Committee, which was followed by an internal departmental procedure devoted to discussion of ethical issues. In 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 the local communities and relevant authorities was sought and obtained in the early stages, which formed a necessary condition for selecting the case studies. The information sheet and consent forms were translated into Arabic and distributed to the literate participants, and read and explained to participants who could not read. In most villages, members of local committees and *Sheikhs* explained that there was no need to sign these consent forms; instead, verbal acceptance was given.

To conduct interviews and facilitate PRA sessions and focus group discussions, several important issues were carefully considered. At the beginning of these sessions I usually performed an opening introduction by informing the participants about myself, my mission and why I had chosen them for involvement. I also issued a brief statement about the research and expected advantages. The participants were assured that their identity and personal information would remain confidential; pseudonyms and codes were used to conceal the identity of participants and villages. 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 would be recorded so long as they had no objections and that they had the right to stop the recording at any stage of the interviews.

Any factors which might negatively impact the conduct of research, such as style of dress, spoken language and individual behavior were taken into account (May, 1997). Throughout my residence in the villages I wore the Sudanese national dress '*El-Tuob*'. This style of dress 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, as adherence to traditional dress is only unnecessary for foreign female researchers, as people generally accept and enjoy other people's traditions so long as they are modest. The careful phrasing of questions regarding sensitive issues such as power relations and political intervention was also considered. Upon concluding the interviews or PRA sessions, the participants were given a chance to ask questions or make further comments. The participants were also made aware of their right to view and comment on the completed report before the material was published.

Limitations

Despite the comprehensive coverage achieved by employing various data collection methods, which provided an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon under study, there were some limitations that required consideration. Firstly, the case study represented some localities in Sudan that share similarities with other localities and communities, yet still maintain unique characteristics in terms of socio-economic and physical environments. This raised the issue of generalizing

research findings beyond the selected cases. This issue has been widely discussed in the literature and was identified as a limitation from the outset. However, the main problem lies in extending the generalization of the findings of each case study to other case studies, where it should instead generalize findings with regards to 'theory', which can act as a vehicle for examining other cases (Yin, 2003:38). Generalization is dependent on the extent of similarities between different interventions and prevailing conditions, and those of other settings. In this research the important aspect of the quantitative outcomes of participatory development processes required analysis in order to identify the quality of people's participation and offer options for improvement. Getting access to this data within a large project 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 the data, apart from that checked against the fieldwork findings in some selected villages, was retrieved from the projects' own records.

Summary

To explore participatory development processes, it is necessary to acquire knowledge about people's lives, values, organizations and practices that influence these processes. 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, I used PRA techniques and focus group discussions extensively, which enabled the research participants to interact with each other, share their experiences, and express their views in a relaxed, open environment. After the conclusion of the PRA sessions

and focus group discussions, the participants were asked to take their time to check the accuracy of the summarized information and ensure that their views were fully recorded.

Observations were recorded daily in field notes and continuously reviewed in order to determine whether further investigation was required and what was sufficiently valuable to be included in the final report. Attendance of the common village meetings between the NKRDP staff and local participants, as well as of the project staff's internal meetings, offered worthwhile opportunities to observe interactions between project stakeholders and record their discussions and responses. These methods formed the channels which allowed me to engage with participants with a wide range of knowledge, experiences and views of the phenomenon under study.

In relation to ethics the participants were fully informed of their rights and that their participation in the study was greatly appreciated. Meanwhile, in order to avoid any inaccuracies or invalidities in the collected data, I established and maintained a professional and trusting relationship with the research participants. The chapter concluded with the identification of limitations such as the generalization of research findings.

3

Participatory Development Discourse

Introduction

This chapter develops a theoretical framework for the research inquiry and explores the historical background of participation as a phenomenon within development discourse. It outlines the debate on participation and its potential in overcoming development crises.

The emergence of the discourse on participation will be examined through the perspectives of various development theories and subsequently close attention will be paid to the definitions, purpose and methods of approach of participation theory. Key elements such as empowerment, women's involvement and civic participation will also be considered. When Growth Theory dominated in the 1940s and 1950s, development planning was seen as a key strategy to achieve desired change, and the crucial role of the state in that process was assumed (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, which would result in greater income utility and welfare, thus enhancing the living conditions of the poor (Griffin, 2000:53). Throughout this approach, development planning was focused only on economic transformation, while aspects such as culture and society were neglected.

During the 1960s Modernization Theory emerged and followed a similar trajectory to growth theory. Modernization theorists (Lewis, 1955; Rostow, 1960) advocated abandoning local traditions if communities intended to enter modernity. Modernization Theory paid some attention to social and institutional changes but economic factors remained the central focus (Brohman, 1996:15). Despite the immense cultural differences between the developed and developing worlds, the orthodoxy of modernizations has been converted into influential strategies, policies and intervention tools which are assumed to achieve economic development in the Third World. These development strategies were generally focused toward industry and trade at the expense of agriculture, while goods, services and opportunities for employment were concentrated in urban areas (Brohman, 1996). Meanwhile, the adoption of modernization was accompanied by the spread of large-scale infrastructure projects, such as the construction of 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.

Modernization Theory is now understood to have caused widespread damage to fragile environments and indigenous cultures in many countries. Furthermore, Chambers (1974) notes that while the central planning approach employed in the 1950s and 1960s was accompanied by development objectives of augmenting the lives of all, this was not realized; instead it generated an increased number of poor and vulnerable people. For example, mainstream agricultural modernization programs have been adopted in developing countries to achieve participation via a trickle-down process.

Information about new technologies was granted to the advanced and influential farmers who were prepared to adopt the new practices. It was expected that other farmers would eventually follow suit, but the experience instead showed that this approach strengthened the economic position of those already well-off and widened the gap between the rich and the poor (Brohman, 1996).

Within the dimension of modernisation theory, participation has been drawn 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 become a means of strengthening new political systems (Hickey and Mohan, 2004:7/9). As time progressed, development theorists debated and analyzed the effects of the modernisation model in developing countries. Nelson and Wright (1995) suggest that the following factors contributed to this debate: firstly, donors and international agencies were concerned about the failure of decades of conventional top-down development approaches. Secondly, in developing countries there was disappointment with the whole development process. Accordingly, it was widely acknowledged in the development industry that post-war development strategies had failed to realise the intended benefits for the majority of the world's population. As a result, Dependency Theory emerged in the early 1960s. This explained the causes of the poor economic performance and increasing poverty of developing countries, in the specific context of Latin America. Shortly after this '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 began to view development from a different perspective. Development is seen as a heterogeneous system which possesses a structure 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' (Rahim, 1994:118). This affirms that development involves structural and social transformation, which implies socio-economic and political change. Therefore, development must be an open-ended concept, because as long as problems continue to arise and our understanding deepens, it may 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 their own development alternatives to rescue their citizens from poverty, hunger, economic and political subordination, and cultural and intellectual subjugation.

Meanwhile, people became identified as the missing element in development efforts, and the limited success of many development initiatives was attributed to the failure of agencies to involve people in the design and implementation of programs and projects. Ever since, international development organizations and bilateral aid agencies began to search for more people-oriented development approaches (Brohman, 1996) and as a result, an alternative development approach emerged in the 1970s. This shift was supported by the Emancipating Participation approach which focused on empowering the oppressed, and which was developed by

educational theorists such as Paul Freire in 1970. Freire's ideas were later used to develop approaches incorporating political literacy within participatory development. This concept concentrates on empowering communities by generating literacy from within the community itself rather than imposing external concepts (Waddington and Mohan, 2004:223). Much of the pressure for increased participation has come from the ideological belief that people should have the right to participate in any planning and decision-making processes that affect their lives.

Approaches to development has shifted completely over several decades, from an emphasis on developing infrastructure and large-scale projects in the 1960s to Alternative Development in the 1970s, which devoted attention to meeting the basic needs of people in developing countries. Alternative development argued for the rectification of existing imbalances in social, economic and political power (Friedmann, 1992:9). This approach emphasized the inherent capacities and knowledge systems of local peoples and the potential of community-level action (UNDP, 2004:1), while still requiring a responsive state to implement policies (Friedmann, 1992:35).

In addressing the conditions of the poor, alternative development argued for involving them in processes that will lead to their empowerment. Thus, some alternative development strategies have included government decentralization. Decentralization measures are meant to assist in the mobilization of local human and material resources, and hence promote more appropriate forms of development (Brohman, 1996:226). Alternative development also emphasized people's right to access information concerning new technologies and reports of successful experiences with

these technologies, so that they might overcome their suspicions. Within this context, the 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 everyone will be involved.' One of the significant contributions of participation and the alternative development model is their requirement that 'some decisions be decentralized to the margins' (Vincent, 2004:112). However, the approaches used to tackle underdevelopment failed miserably in bringing about much meaningful change in developing countries. As there is an extremely unequal distribution of productive resources and assets in rural areas where poverty is severe and living conditions deteriorate, land and other resources are increasingly concentrated in the hands of elite groups (Pitamber, 2001:2).

From the mid-1980s, terms such as participation, empowerment, bottom-up planning and indigenous knowledge achieved dominance in the world of development, and by the 1990s all bilateral development agencies proclaimed their adoption of participatory policies (Henkel and Stirrat 2001:169). The World Bank (1996:7) acknowledges that social change does not occur if external experts alone acquire, analyze and present the information. To reverse this situation, Edwards (1993:86) suggests that participatory development has as its goal 'to equip people with skills, confidence, information and opportunities.'

It has also been acknowledged that the local people of a country or community are the ones who should shape the meanings and values of development and benefit from outsiders' knowledge without being dominated by it (Rahim, 1994:118). Regarding this argument, it has been suggested that

for participation to achieve sustainable outcomes, people should be involved in higher levels of decision-making. This argument suggests that there are different levels of participation. 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; Prokopy, 2005). For example, contribution of money or labor toward a predetermined project can be considered a very low form of participation or even non-participation. Discussion of participation is combined with various theoretical shifts that have emerged during the past three decades. These include the development of feminist, cultural and political perspectives. As a result, concepts such as local knowledge, empowerment, and power relations have emerged in association with participation. 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 Appraisals to be incorporated into participatory development approaches.

Having outlined some aspects of mainstream orthodoxy in the 1950s and 1960s and the emergence of the alternative development approach, the next section provides a range of definitions of participation, which has become a prominent feature of the alternative development model.

Participation: Concepts and Definitions

Participation has many dimensions (Rahnema, 1992); to understand it one needs to explore thoroughly all of its roots and ramifications, which are deeply linked to what is central to

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) that considerations of power and politics are seen as divisive and obstructive factors (Cleaver, 2001:36). Participation has allowed people to employ their human faculties and take control of their own development.

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 mobilize people. There is a need to gradually develop a participatory capacity, which cannot be built like a road or a dam (Uphoff, 1991:488). Participation as a behavior cannot be imposed from above or from an external source; instead, if it is part of people's values and norms, it may develop from there. Bordenave (1994:42) compared the creation of a participatory society to the influence of families upon raising their children, which can be carried out either through dialogue or an authoritarian manner. Bordenave emphasizes the role of the education system in preparing future generations for a participatory society, which can implement the following: adoption of a participatory administrative system inside the school, assignment of responsibilities to the student, participation in community social events, and adoption of a participatory methodology inside the classroom.

Freire (1970:46) asserts that if people are unaware of the causes of their present conditions they will continue to act in a passive and alienated manner, even if asked to do

otherwise. When people develop a participatory competence they become involved in community affairs. In this instance, the disenfranchised need to be aware of the conditions that constrain their active involvement in their social and political environments. However, the challenge is that the oppressed have been accustomed to being excluded and emotionally suppressed for a long time. This situation could be overcome to realize participation and commitment through dialogue, reflections and communication (Freire, 1970:48/51). Moreover, participation should force participants to 'become conscious' and view the realities around them (Stockes, 1995:73). When this happens people can be expected to respond differently. When people believe that they have had genuine participation in decisions which affect them, they will accept the outcomes, even if these adversely affect them. In contrast, if decisions are imposed on them by outsiders or the government, they are likely to reject them sooner or later (Stiglitz, 2002).

Defining Participation

In order to construct a framework to conceptualize and analyze the participatory development process, participation must first be defined. 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.' Participation may be 'moral, amoral or immoral; either forced or free; either manipulative or spontaneous' (Rahnema, 1992:116). Rahnema concludes that participation in general is associated with moral or desirable goals and is seen as a process entailing free exercise. White (1994b:30) also views genuine participation as 'a free act and adherent to moral which is driven by human compassion, selfless motives, sensitivity to the feelings and worth of others,

supportive communication, openness to change, and the shifting of responsibilities and power.'

Concepts of participation in development have evolved over time. Their roots can be traced back to the community and popular participation largely promoted by non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in the 1950s and 1960s. In the late 1970s and early 1980s, multilateral agencies such as the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), International Labor Organization (ILO) and the United Nations Research Institute for Social Development (UNRISD) also began to promote popular participation in development projects and programs. 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 strategy of 'new directions' for the Bank.

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 vested interests play an active role in the decision-making and consequent activities which affect them. The Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA) links participation to the promotion of democracy and equity goals as objectives in themselves which should be promoted in all

development projects. Participation is also considered a means of increasing the efficiency, effectiveness, and sustainability of development projects.

The terms participation, participatory development and popular participation are used interchangeably. 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, this concept was partly initiated by organizations from the global South, manifesting in the call by five hundred grassroots organizations at the Arusha Conference in 1990 for popular participation and transformation. Participatory processes refer to processes by which decisions are made in national governments, as well as at local and provincial levels, 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 criticized for grouping all stakeholders together, ignoring the inequalities that significantly affect the capabilities of poor and marginalized groups. As a result the World Bank-Participatory Development Working Group amended the Bank’s definition to emphasize the marginalized poor, that is, those who are the 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 implies that the state pays attention to local opinions of projects and

plans, especially if there are conflicts between the greater common good and local interests. The question to be raised in some 'Third World' countries is whether the citizens' opinions of public policy-making are treated as significant. In non-democratic societies, citizens' opinions might not be considered to be of concern. This confirms that participation is a multi-dimensional concept and a complex issue, and because it is an inherently political act, it can never be neutral (Brohman, 1996:251). Therefore Nelson and Wright (1995) place participation within an ideological framework. This suggests that people accord the term 'participation' different meanings according to their ideological background. Accordingly, Long (2001) suggests that the true definition of participation emerges from its meanings and practices in a real context. For the purpose of this research, we will adopt the World Bank's 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 genuinely welcome and acknowledged.

Objectives and Purpose of Participation

There is debate about the purpose of participation, specifically, whether it is a means or an end (Cooke and Kothari, 2001:6). The defined objectives of participation appear to vary according to the form and purposes of projects, as well as the policies and strategic context of funding and implementing agencies. The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development suggests that participatory development is essential for at least two reasons: 1) it strengthens civil society and the economy by empowering groups, communities, and organizations to negotiate with institutions and bureaucracies, thus enabling them to influence

public policy and providing a check on government power; and 2) it enhances the efficiency, effectiveness and sustainability of development programs.

Rahnema (1992:121-122) explains that when participation was first introduced as an alternative development model, it was intended to perform at least four functions: cognitive, instrumental, social, and political. In cognitive terms, through participation, people's knowledge and understanding would become the foundations for a new form of development. On the other hand, the instrumental function was designed to provide the parties concerned with information regarding previous failures and to demonstrate alternative strategies. In social terms, participation would give people renewed hope and re-activate development programs, while the political function of participation was to provide development with a new source of legitimating people's empowerment, and the establishment of new links with targeted populations. Because the social function is related to people, firms or development agencies must address the social needs at village level before developing additional support systems appropriate to the required actions in the field (Bagadion and Korton, 1991:73).

In the last decade, theories of participation have distinguished between the phenomenon as a means and as an end. According to Karl (2000:13) participation as a means enables a process through which people cooperate and collaborate in development projects and programs; as an end, participation is a process that achieves people's empowerment, 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; levels are low if the decision-

making and management processes are under the project's control, and of a high level when the poor and powerless become cooperative partners involved at all stages. The World Bank-Participatory Development Working Group considers the following conditions to measure the intensity of participation: information sharing, consultation, decision-making and initiating action (World Bank, 2001a). Information sharing occurs when project beneficiaries are fully informed of the project objectives and how these will affect them. Consultation suggests that people are consulted on key issues and have their views considered. Decision-making occurs when people are involved in making decisions about the project's design and implementation. Finally, initiating action takes place when people make proposals and decisions regarding the implementation of activities.

There is general consensus in the literature that to achieve development objectives, an effective people-oriented approach must be adopted. This approach was presumed to empower local communities who could then take responsibility for their own development. For Cleaver (2001:37), the fundamental theory of participatory approaches is reflected in the efficiency argument, which focuses on enhancing project outcomes, as well as the equity and empowerment argument, which aims to augment individual capacities to improve their own lives. However, there is a clear demarcation between two perspectives on the intended functions of participation:

- Participation as a 'means' to increase efficiency and effectiveness, and to ensure the sustainability of a development project or program.
- Participation as an 'end' to promote stakeholder capacity, self-reliance and empowerment. This

perspective forms the base for identifying ways to enhance the outcomes of people's participation in development interventions.

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

Participation as a Means

The two perspectives of participation as a 'means' and an 'end' are framed by certain concepts. Effectiveness, efficiency, and sustainability shape the view of participation as a means. Projects are perceived as more effective when stakeholders' interests have been identified and included in the project design, implying that stakeholders will share ownership of development interventions. According to the ODA, efficiency is attained when the stakeholders supply the project with wider knowledge and possibly share the financial burden. 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 reports, strategies and discussions that 'participation' is central to fully enacting the concept of sustainable development (Neeffjes, 2000).

Most development agencies have adopted participation as a means, although many have laid claim to 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 this trend: participation is no longer considered a threat; governments and institutions

require participation to achieve high productivity at a low cost, and accept it insofar as they are in a position to control the process; participation is seen as an instrument for achieving development objectives; and 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 provides the real impetus for the popularity of participation. However, instead of viewing participation as a means to improve project or program 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 some examination of power relations. The following section looks at this issue with greater emphasis on primary stakeholders, who are always seen as the most important actors in the participatory development process.

Participation as an End

Brohman notes that the distinction between participation as a 'means' and as an 'end' denotes a method for identifying and measuring empowerment in participatory development projects. The participation concept has evidently been given different meanings in different situations, but genuine participation is believed to consolidate empowerment in some way. Nair and White (1994) assert that empowerment is not a good or service to be supplied, but a condition related to self-reliance, as individuals and groups strengthen their capacity for action and hence develop their own sources 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).

The UNDP views empowerment as a strategy towards initiating learning and organizing processes. Through these processes, local people in rural and urban areas can: 1) define their objectives; 2) assess the implications of the options available; and 3) take responsibility for actions performed to achieve the agreed-upon objectives. In this case, empowerment is about institutional capacities, alliance building, and the development of personal identities and confidence. Freire (1998) asserts that facilitating communication is an essential condition in allowing people to reflect on their problems, ask questions and find solutions. Freire's approach introduced the idea of empowering local people through active participation in open and free dialogue. Through dialogue, people can share and collectively develop ideas and knowledge and gain control over their own life circumstances. The local poor need to be genuinely empowered if alternative development strategies are to achieve their objectives. This requires fundamental changes to the status quo by way of distributing power among ordinary people, and not merely scattered reforms (Brohman, 1996).

There is no blueprint prescription for assuring participation and empowerment, as participation does not occur in a vacuum. It is determined by the socio-economic, environmental, political and cultural context within which individuals and communities live (UNDP, 2004:2). Mathur (1995:159) argues that the principle aim of participation is to empower people. There is always the risk that if participatory development is imported from external sources, it may lead to a new form of dependency instead of empowerment and liberation. There remains general confusion as to who is to be

empowered: certain categories of the poor or socially marginalized, or the community as a whole (Mosse, 2001).

In general, if development projects are without financial constraints, then some unaddressed socio-cultural factors may influence the participatory development processes (Francis, 2001:74). There is widespread agreement in the literature that participation should be seen as 'an end' in itself rather than as 'a means' to improve the outputs of projects and programs. However, there should be some consideration of the type of intervention and whether its intention is to empower people or not. Moreover, understanding the dynamics of power relationships is essential for the success of development processes (Lozare, 1994:230).

For communities to become empowered, the concepts of participation, representation and leadership are important. Oliver (2002) points out that three assumptions exist regarding the leadership systems or the structure of power in any society or organization: (1) that all the systems and structures are artificial and man-made; (2) that the rules are largely established by those at the top; and (3) that those at the top serve themselves first. Accordingly, those holding power might not be prepared to allow others to partake in setting the agenda and managing resources (Blackburn and Holland, 1998:6). Community groups must have the willingness to be empowered and accept the inherent features that accompany empowerment (Barrett, 1995:16). Power can be analyzed and understood through the social norms and customs of a society, considering that all individuals are vehicles of power (Kothari, 2001:141). Kassam (1997) identifies some features that are indicative of empowerment: developing a sense of liberation from former constraining social, economic and political conditions;

developing greater control over their lives and destiny; and developing the capacity to resist the exploitation and injustice instigated by rich and powerful groups.

In summary, the discussions surrounding participation generally agree that if people achieve empowerment, they will be able to express their views, organize themselves, initiate plans, allocate resources, and manage their own development activities. Active participation is the path to empowerment. Most development interventions claim to achieve active participation in some way, because it is recognized as necessary for empowering local communities in general and the 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-centered approach, bottom-up approach and evolutionary approach all refer to the same concept and are used interchangeably by development theorists and practitioners. Participatory approaches are viewed as the most effective way of achieving equitable human and social development. The popularity of this approach owes to a widespread concern with the failure of conventional development strategies to achieve differences in the lives of marginalized and poor people (Mathur, 1995:153). Participatory approaches have emerged to bring development practices in closer proximity to the people, as a result of dissatisfaction with an expert-led, top-down approach (Sillitoe, 2002) and of attempts to challenge social inequalities (Kothari, 2001:142). Participatory approaches 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, can influence and share control over development initiatives, decisions and resources. These mechanisms are crucial to participatory development achieving the objectives of empowerment, efficiency and sustainability.

Mosse (1998:6) identifies a set of interrelated shifts in approaches to planned development, which have emerged as a result of past failures and redefined policy goals: firstly, a shift from narrow technology-led projects to concerns of sector-wide reform and cross-sector issues such as poverty and gender. Secondly, a project is no longer a closed control system, as there has been movement from project-centered to organization-centered concerns, rendering inter-agency links and partnerships important in achieving development objectives and enhancing institutional reforms. Thirdly, there has been a repositioning from the single blueprint approach in planning to more flexible ones, on account of the acknowledgement that development solutions often evolve from experimentation and practice rather than from design. Finally, there has been a shift from centralized approaches towards a decentralized 'bottom-up' participatory approach.

Many theorists differentiate between two approaches: the blueprint approach and the process approach. The blueprint approach consists of reasonably fixed objectives, predetermined outputs, and rigidly structured implementation procedures. The process approach allows for flexibility in project design and typically defines only wider objectives; project inputs, outputs and immediate objectives can be developed as the project progresses. This approach suits projects that seek stakeholder participation (ODA, 1995:104).

This shift from the blueprint approach in development to a learning process approach is a response to unsuccessful centrally planned projects; the process approach has been developed according to previous experience with non-infrastructure projects, in which the blueprint approach did not achieve expectations. The shift implies concerns over reducing public sector costs and increasing effectiveness and long-term sustainability through the involvement of local people, the private sector, development agencies and NGOs (Mosse, 1998:7). The process approach generally requires greater time spent on the preparation and implementation stages, and regular revision, but it is integral to projects which have as their primary objective fostering institutional development and ensuring sustainability through popular involvement (ODA, 1995:112).

At present, there are concerns about efficiency and empowerment, arising from the fact that these concepts match the neo-liberal policies that focus on cost saving and self-reliance. The neo-liberal model emerged in the 1980s, and emphasised the reduction of state intervention to facilitate greater economic growth. Currently, neo-liberalism has become the key framework for designing development policy. Willis (2005) identifies that this policy does not necessarily mean that 'all development theorising will fit into this model,' indicating that the policy can be implemented in different ways and at different levels. This explains why international organizations such as the World Bank and IFAD, which support neo-liberal policies, have engaged in certain grassroots approaches to development.

Within the neo-liberal school of thought, community participation began to receive institutional support because of

its nature as cost-saving, promoting efficiency and fostering 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 of increasing project efficiency. Brohman (1996) notes that in the era of neo-liberalism, popular movements have often tried to fill the gap left by governments' inability or unwillingness to do so.

The emergence of participatory approaches was accompanied by the cultivation of various participatory methods. These methods have been viewed as facilitating the inclusion of the marginalized (Chambers, 1997) and contributing to achieving empowerment. These methods 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 the most attention and has come to occupy a central position in methods of participatory planning, monitoring and evaluation. In the early 1990s, PRA spread rapidly through training programs, networks and publications. This was followed by the adoption of PRA techniques by many development agencies. Chambers (1994:953) defines PRA as 'a family of approaches and methods to enable rural people to share, enhance and analyze their knowledge of life and conditions, to plan and to act.' According to Chambers (1997:103) PRA can reduce the dominance of development professionals and empower the poorest. Therefore, those selected for participation in PRA events are often the disadvantaged, because the latter have limited or no resources, services or control over decision-making (Kothari, 2001). PRA

is most effectively implemented in organizations that have flexible and adaptable cultures and structures, lateral communication, and democratic and participatory natures (Chambers, 1994a). However, there are concerns regarding the rapid spread of bad practices, due to a superficial understanding of techniques and the limited training and inappropriate styles employed by some facilitators. In conclusion, the implementation of PRA techniques has encountered numerous problems. Firstly, there is a tendency to place too much confidence in the techniques and to perceive them as guaranteeing the success of the project, rather than as a tool. Secondly, the success of these techniques requires certain behaviors and attitudes as well as suitable training, pre-conditions which are often not taken into account by project managers (Hailey, 2001:93). Kothari (2001:144) argues that the focus on material inequality when identifying PRA participants may conceal the existence of other influences in people lives.

Participatory approaches are commonly employed in development projects, as the latter are a means 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

A development 'project' has been defined 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' (ODA, 1995:1). For Chambers (1974:13), the term 'project' refers to 'a set of organized development initiatives confined to, or considered in relation to a low-level administrative or geographical area,' while the term 'program'

implies '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 program, but a project may also operate on its own without a program. The literature refers to various phases of the project cycle; these are listed as four main phases. 1) The identification or formulation phase includes assessment of various aspects of an intended project, usually performed by development agencies and/or government representatives. 2) The design phase, also called the project planning or preparation phase, is usually conducted by governments and/or development agencies. 3) The implementation phase begins when the actual activities are carried out. At this stage development agencies and governments tend to seek community participation. 4) The evaluation phase entails monitoring, feedback, midterm reviews and final evaluation after the project's completion (World Bank, 2001a: 2/3).

Projects operate in various ways. Some adopt a blueprint or planning-based approach where events and indicators are defined before their occurrence, at the initiation of the project. The process is thus considered deductive. The opposite of this is an inductive approach, whereby events are abstracts of recent experiences, which tends more towards a learning process approach. By adopting the learning process, a project can have a flexible design, and changes can be made when needed. This stands in clear contrast to the blueprint approach, in which project design has to be implemented in a specified form (known inputs, outputs, costs and activities) and to a fixed time frame (Mosse,1998) . The fact that events and outcomes are established before their occurrence in blueprint approaches means that project management has little choice.

There is no or limited consideration for social and political factors which may influence project outcomes. Thomas (2002:2) points out that a project's design may be based on inadequate information, or may lack of consideration for the partner country's context, value systems and institutional uncertainty, which will affect the overall performance of the project. Certain development agencies, such as ODA, revised this approach and decided to delay the identification of indicators until the project's eventual establishment.

When the main objective of the project is social development, participation becomes an objective in itself. For economic projects, participation is considered a means to achieving other objectives (White, 1994b:16). White asserts that by 1994, no respectable development project could be proposed or funded without the inclusion of the word 'participation'. Development projects supply a context that provides different stakeholders the opportunity to influence the form and quality of interventions. In this regard, projects can bring different interest groups or stakeholders together to share ideas and make decisions about specific aspects related to a community. Participation can be enacted by different groups, individually or collectively, and in different stages of a project cycle. People participate in development projects and programs in different forms, ranging from the contribution of inputs in cash or in kind to sharing knowledge and decision-making.

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 marginalized group within communities. The emergence of participatory approaches to development has been accompanied by debate

and theoretical shifts surrounding gender issues. The following section illustrates how women and gender relations have become part of the participatory development agenda.

Integrating Women into Development

Mainstream development approaches have been accused of neglecting women and gender relations, as women's work has been considered invisible due to its unpaid and under-evaluated nature (Cornwall, 2003). During the 1950s and 1960s, women were largely ignored by development theory and practice. Women's needs and interests have also been neglected by macro-economic programs, despite the fact that the majority of 'Third World' women have long been involved in productive activities (Brohman, 1996:279).

The idea of integrating 'Third World' women into development plans emerged in the early 1970s when American development practitioners and researchers began to push for women's representation in development agencies' programs (Koczberski, 1998:396). 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 sparked recognition of women's roles and encouraged debate on their involvement. However, Koczberski (1998:399) discovers that the concept of 'integration' assumed that women were not already participating in development. It also focused on improving women's status by integrating them into 'productive employment,' presupposing that by moving them from the traditional sector to the modern sector, they would achieve self-progress (Koczberski, 1998: 399).

There are four approaches that determine the capacity of integrating women into development: welfare, equity, efficiency and empowerment (Moser, 1989). In the 1950s and 1960s welfare programs identified women as a vulnerable group. According to Townsend (1993:171) the welfare approach perceived women as passive recipients of development outcomes. However Boserup (1970) proves, using empirical evidence, that women in many African, Latin American and Asian countries were in fact marginalized by development. Boserup (1989) argues that women neither participated in decision-making that affected them and their families nor was their work valued. These concerns turned attention towards women's roles and interests, and hence the United Nations launched the 1975-85 Decade for Women. This decade was followed by the organization of international conferences and assemblies that generated various measures aimed at promoting women in development programs. Since then, almost all countries have acknowledged the need to raise the status of women.

Under the auspices of the Decade for Women, development programs focused on increasing gender equity. Efficiency joined equity in framing the Women in Development (WID) approach. According to Koczberski (1998:400), the efficiency argument was based on the understanding that women were not contributing to development, and therefore the WID efficiency policies of the 1980s focused on encouraging women to spare time for and work harder towards development initiatives. What is termed an 'alternative approach' for integrating women into development is based on the criteria of the modernization theory of development which relied on Gross Domestic Product

(GDP), and therefore the achievements of the formal sector (Koczberski, 1998.)

The WID framework emphasises facilitating women's access to education and employment, which requires legal reform and changing attitudes to help integrate women into the modernisation process (Brohman, 1996:283-84). However, some argue that although much legislation was amended, practices did not change (Townsend, 1993).

Within the WID framework there is also a focus on anti-poverty programs. Anti-poverty approaches highlighted the need to meet women's practical needs without posing the threat of significant social change (Moser, 1989), meaning that the anti-poverty approaches avoided certain sensitive issues that related to strategic gender needs. Accordingly, the integration of 'Third World' women into development processes through the WID approach was viewed from the radical feminist perspective as a way of increasing exploitation rather than achieving liberation (Kabeer, 1994). This perspective criticized the gender division of labor and devaluation of women's work, and insisted on the equal distribution of power between men and women. It was claimed that 'Third World' women were disadvantaged due to gender divisions (Boserup, 1989). As a result of these criticisms of WID, the Women and Development approach (WAD) emerged based on Marxist and dependency frameworks. This focused on women's relationship with development, and sought the causes of women's exclusion. This view encouraged revision of the WID approach, leading to the emergence of Gender and Development (GAD) in the 1980s. The use of the word 'gender' instead of 'women' directed attention to social relationships between men and women, which some authors argue have maintained women's

subordination (Young, 1997:51). Not only did GAD focus on relations between men and women, but addressed power relations and viewed women as agents of change. GAD specialists argued that women required 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 labor and allocator of social capital. In this regard, there is a need for state support as most women in the Third World have minimal political power.

In summary, the WID approach focused on the disadvantages of women in a male-dominated society, while GAD emphasized power relations between women and men (Jolly, 2000). The different approaches towards integrating women in development have accorded different ways of viewing and practicing development. While these approaches focused on 'Third World' women, the problems and needs of the latter were identified by development experts and consequently their influence over the development process was restricted (Koczberski, 1998:395). The problems of mainstream development practices, which include misrepresentation and generalization, the use of rigid project frameworks, and limited space for 'Third World' peoples to define their own destinies, continued to persist in both the WID and GAD approaches. Koczberski views the approaches aimed at integrating women into development as merely incorporating women into existing development practices under orthodox notions of development.

At present, there is growing concern about gender inequality. Gender inequality is considered in terms of income distribution; access to productive inputs such as credit, command over property or earned income; gender biases in

labor markets; and social exclusion experienced by women in a variety of economic and political institutions (Cagatay, 1998:8). Gender inequality has not only been associated with an increased rate of domestic violence, but also the restriction of life opportunities for women (Engle, 1997:35). In this regard, Cagatay (1998:14) points out that the UNDP emphasizes the necessity of transformative strategies to eliminate gender inequalities, which entail addressing the strategic needs of women. As a result, when the United Nations set the eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in 2000, the aim of promoting gender equality was prioritized 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. In addition to establishing it 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 to provide suggestions to help national governments achieve gender equality and women's empowerment. The UNDP has promoted its Gender Mainstreaming policy programs and organizational structures. Gender Mainstreaming is defined as 'the process of assessing the implications for women and men of any planned action, including legislation, policies or programs, in any areas and at all levels.' It is a strategy for making women's and men's concerns and experiences an integral dimension of the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and

programs 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 gendered perspectives and attention to the goal of gender equality are central to all stages of policy development, research, advocacy, dialogue, legislation and resource allocation, and to the planning, implementation and monitoring of programs and projects.

Since the adoption of participatory approaches within the alternative development framework, many shortcomings have been encountered. Some theorists have criticized present development agendas and expressed concerns about their objectives and effectiveness. Rahnema criticizes the alternative development approach for not defining what institutional support is needed to realize its projects and/or identifying the ways in which political economy shapes agency in the context of development. Overall, both post-war development and alternative development approaches were criticized for their failure to engage with development as complex socio-economic and political processes (Hickey and Mohan, 2004). Although development efforts have been enacted for many decades, it has been debated that there have been no tangible improvements in people's lives, and instead living standards in most developing countries have declined rather than ameliorated. In 1999 the World Bank declared that the development process had been disappointing, despite improvements in social indicators. Reports demonstrate that poverty trends have worsened and that most low-income countries continue to be dependent on aid. Stieglitz (2002:166) analyzes the situation by linking the failure of development efforts to the absence of the rule of law and transparency. He argues that these conditions have

weakened economies and undermined participatory processes in many countries. This has created global concern about the effectiveness of development processes. As a result, the World Bank launched the Comprehensive Development Framework (CDF) in 1999, which aims to factor in continuously changing circumstances and initiate processes to seek more successful approaches. The basic elements of the CDF are that firstly, development constraints are structural and social and cannot be overcome through economic and policy measures alone. Secondly, policy reform and institutional development entail domestic ownership, and cannot be imposed or imported. Finally, successful development requires partnership between governments, civil society, development agencies and the private sector (World Bank, 2001b). Kothari and Minogue (2002:6-7) suggest that there exists a need to develop new meanings, agendas, processes and targets for development. This means that development theories must adopt a greater flexibility and accept that in practice, circumstances continually change, and thus deeper understanding of the material conditions is required.

Within alternative development, it has been noticed that there is a significant disparity between theory and practice, particularly regarding participation. Debate about alternative development approaches has been directed at the methods employed to design and implement development programs and projects (Brohman, 1996). Others (Simon and Narman, 1999; Hickey and Mohan, 2004) question whether alternative development strategy is really different from traditional mainstream models, and whether it presents a genuinely viable option. Participation theorists and development practitioners constantly debate and redefine the meanings, objectives, and

strategies of participatory development. As participation has attracted greater attention in the new millennium, its role has broadened as new approaches have emerged in theory, policy and practice (Hickey and Mohan, 2004:3).

Civic Participation

Alternative development strategies have often been debated in terms of how best to accelerate the production of goods and services. However, in so doing it has neglected aspects such as representation, partnership and citizens' rights (Griffin, 1999: xvi). Because alternative development has failed to identify what type of socio-political agency and/or institutions are required to achieve its objectives, the new agenda embodied in participatory approaches has focused on these themes and tended to involve people as active citizens (Hickey and Mohan, 2004:3). Participation is seen as inherently guaranteeing people's rights to freedom of opinion and expression, and to receive and utilize information. Within the contemporary development arena, there has developed a trend of broadening the participation debate to encompass governance issues. This is accompanied by the emergence of the 'participatory citizenship' concept, which links different forms of participation in the political, community and social spheres (Gaventa, 2004:29). This notion assumes that through participatory citizenship, people can augment their social status and increase their control over socio-economic resources (Mohan, 2004:66). The promotion of citizenship is viewed as a tool with the ability to overcome the perceived tyranny of localized project-led approaches to participation and transform participatory capacities at different levels (Cleaver, 2004:271). Participatory citizenship intends to engage development agencies and projects in political processes to create new

opportunities for dialogue and participation, and foster alliances between state and society. This notion is essential in societies in which people's rights as citizens are either completely ignored or denied to particular minorities or groups. Participatory citizenship offers new methods for communities, development agencies and civil society to enhance the outcomes of participatory development. The challenge now is to establish a political context in which governments respects citizens' rights, and the disenfranchised are provided occasion to speak, participate, and establish rules that maintain their rights and guarantee accountability and transparency (Vincent, 2004).

In general, this concept places more emphasis on participation in civic affairs and decision-making processes. It aims to extend space for people to consider the type of policies they desire, and to engage in dialogue and different forms of democratic decision-making. Recently, participation in development has become focused on people as 'makers and shapers' rather than just 'users and choosers' (Cornwall, 2003:26). It is evident 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 according them the role of partners and makers of development.

Having examined the main issues surrounding participatory development approaches, the following section examines one of the most important principles of participatory development: the incorporation of local people's knowledge into the planning of programs and projects.

Indigenous Values and Knowledge

Until the end of the 1960s, the dominant development paradigms tended to dismiss local knowledge. Keough (1998:189) asserts that people who have lived their whole lives in the targeted communities and who have a direct stake in the outcomes of development interventions have valuable knowledge to contribute. However, the modernization approach viewed traditional knowledge as an obstacle to development, being non-scientific, traditional, primitive and irrational. The failure of development projects, especially in Africa and Latin America, was associated with these misconceptions. Mathur (1995:160) points out that development planners view things differently from recipients, which explains why an externally designed participatory approach cannot yield the desired results. Therefore, it was widely believed that interventions would benefit from some understanding of indigenous knowledge and practices (Sillitoe, 2002b). In particular, if external development planners and practitioners respect and acknowledge indigenous knowledge, this can establish trust between them and local people and facilitate the latter's acceptance of any technologies introduced in projects.

The emergence of different ideas, objectives and strategies accompanying modern forms of development may generate new struggles and confrontations. Responding to this requires different methods of participation and communication, such as holding joint dialogues which encompass internal and external knowledge. The consequences of introducing new concepts are critical because they involve identity, beliefs and values (Rahim, 1994:119). Local or indigenous knowledge has established itself as a central theme within participatory development. It is frequently affirmed that indigenous peoples

have their own effective practices of science and resource use (Sillitoe, 2002:2b). According to van Vlaenderen (2004:138), local knowledge includes concepts, beliefs, values, goals, perceptions and processes. It refers to 'what is' and 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. Chambers (1997) points out that technical and cultural knowledge is an important element in the search by citizens for solutions to their problems. Brohman notes that at the stages of defining and implementing development initiatives, community members often share an interest in preserving and expanding local knowledge and culture. This may be a form of self-defense reacting against externally imposed policies. Moreover, using indigenous knowledge in development programs may endow it with greater suitability to local conditions, provide solutions to locally-specific problems, and create a sense of self-worth and self-esteem among locals, and in this way enhance popular participation and empowerment. Generally, people will be unwilling to share their knowledge unless they are made welcome to do so and their knowledge is respected (Keough, 1998:189).

There has long been a trend to proclaim that development assistance aims to transfer technology, or material, knowledge and skills, from developed to developing countries (Agunga and Scroft, 1994). The rejection or misuse of certain technologies may be related to the fact that these technologies have little or no relation to local needs, or that the targeted community lacks skills and training. Uphoff (1991:475) argues that it cannot be assumed that local people have all the required 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 newly introduced technology. The stimulation of local experimentation has proven to be useful in exploring indigenous knowledge, strengthening people's confidence in their own solutions and offering options that are applicable to the prevailing ecological, economic and socio-cultural conditions (Hagmann et al., 1998:48/51). It must be pointed out that social analysis has emerged as a technique by which knowledge of specific peoples and their cultures can be gained and employed to design strategies which involve the community in development efforts. Those involved in the 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 may use such knowledge to benefit themselves and exclude others, participatory communication must occur to offer opportunities for all partners to exchange ideas and information through open dialogue. Participatory communication is indeed an effective technique of exchanging knowledge. The ability to communicate links the acquisition of knowledge to the dissemination of access to information. 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 enact this, there is a need to establish channels and mechanisms of communication, and for accommodation of people's knowledge and ideas.

In rural areas where people have little access to television, radio continues to be the most influential means of communication. To move from radio to a two-way

communication medium requires changing the attitudes of those who control the media (Thomas, 1994). This implies 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 its failures over the past decades. Healy argues that any strategy that excludes debate continues to generate anti-democratic planning. Instead, effective planning requires open communication with all stakeholders.

According to Stiglitz (2002:169), without open dialogue the suspicion will remain that decisions have been made in favour of special interests and not on the basis of community interests. For Freire, genuine dialogue cannot exist unless the contributors engage in critical thinking. He argues that without dialogue, communication is absent, and without communication there can be no legitimate education. Dialogue makes people aware of their objectives and their situation. Freire proposes that in dialogue we must not attempt to impose our view on others, but rather to converse about each other's views and situation.

The examination of the importance of local knowledge brings the main trajectory of this chapter to its end. The next section provides a summary and concludes the chapter.

Summary

Since the early 1950s, development and its mainstream theories have gained much attention. However, there is no unity in the varying perspectives of development theories. Some perceive development from the economic growth perspective,

while others view development as a multi-dimensional concept which embodies socio-economic and cultural aspects. Deepening poverty and underdevelopment has challenged the continuation of development practice from an economic perspective alone. Accordingly, mainstream approaches to development have begun to devote attention to meeting people's basic needs and have encouraged the adoption of the alternative development approach, which prioritizes people's participation and local knowledge. This participatory development has as its goal to provide people with necessary skills and resources.

During the last two decades, the concept of participation has been widely employed in development discourse. The definition of participation has evolved over time, which has evidently influenced theorists' opinions and development agencies' policies and strategies accordingly. The meaning of participatory development has widened to ambitiously refer 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. Participatory development theories reflect two perspectives: participation as a means to generate efficiency, effectiveness and sustainability; and participation as an end aimed ultimately at empowerment.

Most criticism of participatory development is directed towards the mainstream and populist form of participation in the 1980s, due to its failure to engage with underlying development processes. Recent theories of participation instead focus on building relationships between ordinary people and the institutions that affect their lives. Accordingly, in the new millennium the concept of participatory citizenship has come to

dominate participatory development literature. This concept is about much more than merely consulting people to successfully resolve social, cultural and economic issues. The primary goal of participation is to give due responsibility to people for, and control over, their lives.

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

In the following Chapters Five to Nine the research participants play a central role in presenting strong arguments on major issues that influence development processes in Sudan. They explain their views on the role and attributes of influential development providers, such as the government, local NGOs and development agencies.

Participation in Practice

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 have been omitted from, or rarely covered in, the literature.

Development theorists contend that participatory approaches to development have not fulfilled their promise of empowering the poor. Mohan and Hickey state 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 marginalized people’ (2004:3).

The literature on participation also points out that there is a disparity between theory and practice. Lewis (1998:103) asserts that more takes place in development projects than what is normally defined in official project documents. Lewis suggests that if this insight is rendered of greater visibility to project actors, more might be learned about the progress and potential of projects. Kothari and Minogue (2002) suggest that there is also a need for a clear understanding and explanation of the reasons behind the failure of development and the relation between practice and theory. These concerns underpin the research questions of this thesis, which largely aims to discover

the factors that have influenced participation in development interventions and how the outcomes of participatory development projects can be enhanced.

This chapter begins by highlighting the role and approaches adopted by development providers. Subsequently, the behavior of development professionals and the role of community organizations are briefly examined. This is followed by introducing the process of women's involvement in community organizations and illustrating practical experiences of this. The factors that influenced people's participation in development interventions are highlighted, and the final section summarizes the chapter.

Role and Impact of Development Providers

In participatory development, all those involved in development processes are commonly referred to as 'stakeholders'. Stakeholders usually include governments (representatives or specialised agencies), donor agencies, implementing organizations, civil society, and local communities. Karl classifies stakeholders into three categories: primary stakeholders, or 'those people who are ultimately affected by a project'; secondary stakeholders, who are 'intermediaries in the process of delivering support to the primary stakeholders'; and external stakeholders, who are 'those not formally involved in a project, but may affect or be affected by it.' The Overseas Development Administration notes that within development projects there are three main groups: funding agencies (donors), implementing agencies, and the beneficiaries who are usually considered primary stakeholders. The terms used to refer to those who benefit from or are affected by development processes are evolving over

time, including the rural poor, target groups, beneficiaries, stakeholders, participants and partners. Different stakeholders may have different interests, and their commitment and sense of ownership of programs is essential in achieving successful outcomes (Mosse, 1998). Development projects usually undertake a stakeholder analysis to identify the relevant partners or participants, and which groups have the responsibilities of decision-making, resource allocation, planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation.

In general, development agencies operate in different ways. For example, 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. Meanwhile, international NGOs typically work directly with people and actively seek their contribution to identify problems and potential solutions (ODA, 1995; Long, 2001:10/11; McGee, 2002). There are implicit assumptions that national and international NGOs somehow embody the concepts of participation and empowerment (Henkel et al., 2001). This has created considerable debate over what is of greater use, relying on national NGOs to adopt participatory development, or calling for more collaborative partnerships between NGOs and the public sector (Pretty and Scoones, 1995:160).

Since the 1970s development agencies and donors, as well as local governments, have approved a variety of development projects throughout the Third World. These have covered almost all kinds of goods and services but have focused mainly on rural communities. Rural development has been considered to be the key to reducing poverty levels, unemployment, and inequality in developing countries. This

trend has received attention in the literature due to the fact that the previous development approaches based on classical development models have failed to improve the living conditions of rural people, and even the urban population.

Initially, development agencies were the ones who designed, managed, implemented and evaluated development programs and projects. However, from the 1970s they began to show concern for greater efficiency, sustainability and partnership. The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) helmed the 1979 World Conference on Agricultural and Rural Development which devoted interest to participation. In 1980 the German Technical Corporation (GTZ) considered the participation of the poor to be a main criterion for determining the quality of its work. The Swedish International Development Cooperation Authority (SIDA) in 1981 launched a strategy that focused on involving the poor in rural development programs. In 1990 the World Bank formed the Participatory Development Working Group, which had as its task to review and document the World Bank's experiences with participation, and those of other agencies, and to provide the World Bank with proposals for improvements. The World Bank began to support processes whereby the stakeholders generate, share and analyze information, establish priorities and objectives, and develop tactics. These people-centred paradigms focused on social issues and aimed to assist field workers to cope with project activities. The World Bank Operations Evaluation Department (2001a:2) reported that community participation significantly increased in World Bank assisted-projects, as well as in the preparation of Country Assistance Strategies. Participation has been greatest in projects with community-level activities concerning issues such as agriculture, health, water supply,

environment and education. Participation has been less influential in infrastructural sectors such as transportation, energy and industry, and has had least impact in public sector management, financial, and multi-sector projects. There has also been less participation in certain geographical areas, mainly in the regions of the Middle East, North Africa, Europe and Central Asia. Levels of participation have been uneven throughout the phases of the project cycle and many projects have entailed only limited participation of women. The quality of participation has also varied between projects. In some cases, meeting with stakeholders was merely about gaining their acceptance for a specific program, and participants were given little feedback after their consultation. The World Bank report showed that overall there was great variation in the level and quality of participation. This variation could be attributed to the different objectives of development projects, policies of the implementing agencies, and socio-cultural settings within which interventions were implemented. In 1993, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) launched a complete reform process of its development activities and intensively adopted participation.

The flow of large amounts of resources to projects may be a disadvantage in affecting the normal capacity of local communities to deal with their problems after the withdrawal of development projects. Charlton and May (1995) disagree however, and argue that a development project should be seen as a valuable opportunity rather than a constraint. On the other hand, Fernando (1995:180) asserts that participation would reach its peak when access to resources bridges the gap between reality and aspirations. This view challenges the present self-help approach, which is based on the belief that

projects should lessen their dependence on external inputs. Nevertheless, this shift towards self-help by international financial institutions and development organizations is seen by Berner and Phillips (2005:19) as 'a masking defense' against calls for redistribution. It is argued that the self-help approach is concerned with efficiency rather than effectiveness and empowerment. Berner and Phillips question whether this approach suits all poor communities and suggest 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).

Participatory development practices have been accompanied by the adoption of various participatory methods, which were assumed to serve as a tool of empowerment for participants. During the period from the mid-1980s to the mid-1990s, there were many methodological innovations which aimed to promote the theory and practice of participation (McGee, 2002). Participatory methods such as PRAs permit the exploration and utilization of diverse knowledge, insofar as local communities are given a chance to express and reflect on their own experiences and opinions. Many government agencies, international NGOs, and bilateral and multilateral organizations claim to use these methods as part of their effort to involve and empower people in development.

In general, development practice has continued to revolve around projects, but with minor shifts in scope and

conditions. For example, New Zealand's Aid Program and Australia's Overseas Aid Program have started to focus on more precisely defined projects and to display greater concern for efficiency and accountability (Overton and Storey, 2004:5). Clearly, the success of participatory development projects depends on the readiness of donors and implementing agencies to adopt a process approach and delegate detailed responsibilities and decision-making powers to local stakeholders (Eylers and Foster, 1998). Accordingly, importance is placed on involving primary stakeholders and associated groups in various development stages, particularly in planning, monitoring and evaluation. Thomas (2002:3/6) argues that it is widely acknowledged that the designing of projects is an important stage in the planning process, and it is imperative that partners are engaged in all aspects of planning to ensure that local needs are incorporated. Additionally, participatory monitoring and evaluation has received special attention. Through these processes, people assess the impact of participation and interventions. They can also provide information from any previously implemented development efforts. In participatory approaches, monitoring and evaluation must be shared by all actors, considering that people should be able to evaluate their input and achievements from their own perspective (Schneider and Libercier, 1995b). There are various reasons for involving development participants in the evaluation of project performance, in particular that it fosters and employs people's capacities and reflects the perceptions of those targeted by interventions.

In this regard, the FAO's People's Participation Program (1990) developed a participatory evaluation approach

based on group monitoring and on-going evaluation performed in group meetings. Meanwhile, the Department for International Development has developed what is called an Output-to-Purpose Reviews Approach (OPRs). This approach was developed as part of an overall review and reform of the management of project cycles and monitoring and evaluation procedures. OPRs assess development programs during the implementation period, in place of mid-term reviews. The key feature of this approach is the importance attached to considering impact assessment as a supportive component in the development process, rather than as amounting to bureaucratic information. The participation and ownership-sharing of stakeholders are essential factors in the success of this approach. OPRs allow adjustments to be made to outputs, indicators and assumptions. They also sanction changes in the purposes of the project, which may indicate that problems exist in the original project design.

Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have been seen as pioneers of participatory development. NGOs have gained the respect and confidence of donors and other development agencies. They are identified as the most qualified instruments with the capability to involve people in development processes. Brohman (1996) argues that NGOs, through participatory fieldwork, have succeeded in providing local communities with innovative solutions to their problems. Brohman explains that NGOs possess advantages over other development agencies, on account of their flexibility, speed of operation, and ability to respond quickly when special circumstances arise. NGOs by nature have the special status of non-governmental organizations, so are not trapped by cumbersome bureaucratic barriers (Rahnema, 1992). There is

an assumption that when NGOs rely on indigenous knowledge, they can become more efficient and effective in service provision. Therefore, they can both gain the trust of the international community and play a significant role at grassroots level if they make it their intention to do so, as international NGOs tend to plan and implement small-scale projects with emphasis on community participation.

Despite best intentions and efforts, errors and failures are evident in the work of all development organizations, whether international agencies, bilateral donors, host governments, NGOs or banks (Chambers, 1997:17). Cernea (1991:189) associates these shortcomings 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 is expensive, time-consuming, technically complicated and may generate undesirable or negative findings. Many authors acknowledge the need for evaluation of participation levels in development projects, suggesting that it serves the following purposes: providing information on the impact of participation on project outcomes and performance, justifying costs and investments in participatory development, using the information as the foundations for reforming and implementing new projects, and strengthening the capacity of the participants.

Another area found to be of importance in implementing a successful participatory development program

or project is building and sustaining supportive networks and partnerships, which attempt to create links between the donor agencies and recipient communities. Participatory development stands for a partnership built upon dialogue between the various actors (stakeholders), during which agendas are established collectively, and indigenous knowledge and opinions are deliberately sought and respected (Schneider, and Libercier, 1995b: 30). The concepts of partnership and relationship dominate much of the literature of development agencies, particularly as it is believed that some features of networks have the potential to allow marginalized groups to become agents in development. The problem is that if development agencies do decide to change their ways of managing and implementing activities, they would still be influenced by their own motives, which may differ from those of other actors (Lewis, 1998). In this sense, it is very important for partners to be able to negotiate, coordinate and compromise. However, despite all this rhetoric of partnership and empowerment, donors and implementing agencies continue to follow top-down or traditional approaches to development in practice.

Some authors point out that the generation of change through participatory projects depends primarily on the skills, enthusiasm, experiences and motivation of professionals (Black, 1991:158-59). In fact, development professionals have received significant attention in participatory development literature, and it is important to examine their varying views and how they influence the practice of participatory development.

The Role of Development Professionals

Chambers (1983/1997:2) suggests that the professionals, specialists and practitioners from different disciplines, as well as politicians and decision-makers, whose actions and decisions impact the poor should step down, sit, listen and learn from the powerless. The World Bank has acknowledged that consultation and consideration are essential prerequisites for participation. In fact, experience shows that social change rarely occurs when external experts analyze the process and produce the outcomes (World Bank, 1996:7).

In participatory development processes, the key personnel are the development workers in direct contact with people at the village level (Mosse, 2001). They are given various titles: field workers, facilitators, catalysts, change agents, promoters, animators, organizers, and extension workers. No agency or NGO can function without them (Mathur, 1995). Rahnema points out that the term 'participation' creates enthusiasm and hope among field workers engaged in grassroots activities. Fieldworkers are the link between local communities and overarching projects; their direct involvement and interaction with locals accords them the ability to develop insight into people's needs, preferences, and perceptions. Fieldworkers usually develop their own interpretation of communities' cultures and attitudes, as well as of project management and policies (Mosse, 2001). These can be positive or negative and may create biases.

The behavior and attitudes of development professionals have been heavily criticized. For example, professionals have been seen as a large part of the problem, while the poor may supply solutions if their needs are considered and their knowledge welcomed (Chambers,

1991:533). Nevertheless, professionals and practitioners can, with the support of their organizations, negotiate or delimit people's choices, which reveal the power they have to shape the accumulation of knowledge and influence the process of local empowerment (Kothari, 2001:152). Participatory development requires a paradigm shift in the behavior of development professionals. This shift is largely 'personal rather than institutional and political' (Chambers, 1997). Lozare (1994:238) argues that development professionals and communicators who encourage greater popular participation in the planning and implementation of development must confront the following realities: firstly, the need to change development workers' attitudes towards local people as passive targets of development programs; and secondly, the need to shift power from development workers to communities and reallocate power within communities.

Others see professionals as victims just as the locals are; both are controlled by donors, development agencies and governments. Taylor describes similarities between project beneficiaries and the employees of development organizations in developing countries, as both may perceive the organization as an instrument sustaining their livelihoods. He asserts that employees and targeted communities are both dependents and relatively powerless compared to the organization. Based on a case study analysis, Mosse (2001:21) notes that professional staff who try to engineer participation by focusing on investing in communities' needs, rather than merely delivering services, are soon perceived by both the project management and community as under-performing. Mosse 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' behavior, which analyzed a completed project in Eastern India and focused on the role of action research in promoting governance reform. They found that the frequent lack of responsiveness from officials was not a matter of personal attitudes, but related to institutional constraints: 1) the lack of training and skills required to work with the public; 2) the arbitrary nature of career progression, limited to higher ranking staff; 3) the lack of incentives to undertake work efficiently; and 4) the dependence of the monitoring of individual performance on top-down surveillance rather than public accountability.

Professionals can continue to play an important role in projects as organizers, facilitators, catalysts and animators. They need to be aware of local systems and build relationships with communities through dialogue. They can engage in capacity building activities by providing communities with information and helping them to make decisions based on in-depth analysis of their conditions. A cooperative working environment among all participatory development actors, especially professionals, requires openness and dialogue (Kelly, 2004), otherwise conflict may emerge. Tembo (2003:45) points out that unresolved conflicts between development actors will affect their interactions with each other and the outcomes of their efforts.

Involving local people in participatory development activities is often achieved through community organizations. Many authors and theorists highlight the important role of community organizations as a mechanism for succeeding with participatory development. Much of the literature places stresses the functions of civil society groups, but tends to focus

on professional development NGOs while largely neglecting the strategic role of grassroots organizations and self-help groups (Mitlin, 2004:176). The following section examines this issue.

Formation of Community Organizations

Weekes-Vagliani asserts that there is a need to devise mechanisms which give impetus to participatory development. Local community organizations are seen as a potential mechanism. Chambers (1991:533) suggests that 'to put people first, and to put poorer people first of all, requires organizations that are strong and sustainable and policies to support them.' In complex socio-political environments the theory and practice of participatory development calls for including local organizations and civil society in decision-making processes (Warren, 1998:122). There is an unwavering belief that building and supporting local organizations is essential for involving people in all stages of development. The formation of organizations and reform of existing local structures is highlighted in the literature and also raised in this study.

In the implementation of participatory development interventions, there is a tendency to rely on NGOs at national and regional levels, and to support the formation of community organizations at grassroots level. In this regard, Black 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 organizations and the involvement of communities in assessing needs and planning projects, all development agencies identify this as their objective, but clearly, only a few have put this into practice. Moreover, many development interventions devise community structures similar

to the arrangements of bureaucratic structures (Cleaver, 2001:42). The actual practice of development has demonstrated that alternative development programs and projects have also adopted the top-down administrative structure and have not afforded any opportunities to local organizations to participate in decision-making processes. Uphoff (1991:494) relates this to the frequent weakness or non-existence of local organizations.

Overall, NGOs have succeeded in delivering development at grassroots level, but in many countries have created new professional elites with status and benefits, which are equivalent to or exceed that of senior government officials (Rahnam, 1995:29). Pretty and Scoones (1995:163) maintain that many NGOs in the Third World, especially non-membership organizations, are not accountable. Moreover, it is evident that those NGOs have wasted the resources and time of communities (Pretty and Scoones, 1995:164).

Within the field of development there has been a continuous debate about the exclusion of certain social sectors due to gender, ethnicity, class or religion (Kothari and Minogue, 2002). Therefore, the gender dimension of development activities has gained significant attention from development agencies. The next sections examine this issue and some related experiences.

Involving Women in Community Organizations

The debate over whether it is better to form separate organizations for men and women respectively or include both in the same organization is still unresolved. Uphoff argues that separate organizations for women would enhance their achievements and women's solidarity, but in circumstances such as the limited availability of funds, it may not be viable to

have separate organizations. However, in this case there is a risk of placing women's participation under the control of men (Schneider and Libercier, 1985b). It may be necessary to expand opportunities for women's voices to be raised by installing them in existing committees; however, this may be insufficient if female participants are unconcerned about other women, or their opinions and concerns are not valued by male members (Cornwall, 2003). Furthermore, Evans (2003) observes that any organization is structured by power relations, which entail an inequitable distribution of gains and losses. This means that it is likely that conflict will emerge, the resolution of which requires an understanding of the socio-economic environment and the assumption of dialogue and negotiations.

The next section presents the findings of studies which deal with various issues related to non-governmental organizations.

NGOs: Practical Experiences

Based on analysis of 150 organizations from across the developing world, Uphoff summarises the characteristics of local organizations that enable them to function effectively. Informal systems of operation were generally more successful than formal ones, because local people tended to be unfamiliar with such formal proceedings; organizations performed better when decision-making was shared between the executive committees (or many different committees) and the general assembly composed of all members; horizontal links with similar organizations and vertical links with organizations above and below inspired enhanced performance and stability; and the size of the organization was not a significant factor in

determining the level of success. People adhered and responded positively to the supportive organizations in which they found themselves.

A study of attitudes towards participation, which involved 230 governmental and non-governmental organizations in Africa, found that ordinary people typically participate in the planning and implementation stages, while monitoring and evaluation is conducted by outsiders (Guijt, 1991).

The Wasteland Development Program in India, through the organization Social Action for Rural and Tribal Inhabitants, supported the formation of groups for women as a mechanism to strengthen women's political voice within local organizations. These groups succeeded in obtaining tenure rights to common land for women. They also provided a base from which women could challenge the gender division of labor within households and in society. Studies showed that, as a result of these efforts, men began to assist in household chores while women worked on the wastelands (Weekes-Vagliani, 1995:67).

In Fernando's case study of one Sri Lankan NGO's experience of participatory development at grassroots level, he differentiates between two types of persons who could be identified as leaders. Firstly, there is the village leader who guides the community on an ideological basis and receives respect in return. Such a person mobilizes resources, including human, for community use. Second are the village brokers who negotiate resource flows from outside the village and offer knowledge regarding the operation of such systems.

In 1987, Oxfam implemented the Kebkabiya Food Security Project in North Darfur in Sudan, which focused on building seed banks (Cornwall, 2003). It has been noticed that the men made all community decisions, while female contributions were initially limited to helping to build seed banks. Oxfam addressed these 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 previously been encouraged to form their own committees. Oxfam's strategy relied on working separately with the women, and then attempting to persuade the men of the value of involving women in their committees. This aimed to instill confidence among women so that in their involvement in male-run committees, they could speak out and address their concerns. Following this, women initiated requests for practical assistance and support to undertake income-generating activities such as poultry-raising and handicrafts. Oxfam refused to respond to these requests, because they worried that these types of activities would maintain traditional gender roles and hence reinforce gender inequality rather than empowerment (Cornwall, 2003). According to Cornwall, the needs and interests of Kebkabiya women were not taken into account because the NGO's policy contradicted with participants' interests. Cornwall explains that despite Oxfam's commitment to participation, the organization is guided by its own objectives, which were believed to be in the women's interests. On the other hand, based on his lengthy working experience as a development worker in Sudan, Osman (2002:24) reflects on Oxfam's experiences in Sudan by asserting that development organizations should not be

surprised if they face particular resistance to interventions in communities with strict gendered codes of behavior.

Hailey explores the development approaches adopted by South Asian NGOs in case studies of nine organizations in three countries: Bangladesh, India and Pakistan. The study reveals that the organizations invest time in building personal relationships with the communities and networks of trusting relationships between organizational staff and local people. A key element in the success of these NGOs was their leaders' commitment to social justice and enhancing the lives of the rural poor, and their clear vision of how they could contribute to local development. Hailey concludes that the South Asian NGOs successfully adopted informal approaches to participation, which were dependent on personal interaction. This relied on personalized criteria such as trust, respect and friendship. Hailey (2001:89) finds that the participation of local communities in NGO programs came willingly and naturally as a result of this highly personalized interaction between the NGO staff and communities. These NGO staff engaged with and listened to the community in an unstructured, informal manner. The NGOs presented three justifications for not using formulaic participatory techniques 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 personalized methods than to the functional and formulaic approach; and 3) formal approaches are seen as alien impositions by outsiders to promote certain values or political agendas.

Mosse's study examines the experience of the Kribhco Indo-British Farming Project (KRIBP) in India, which was managed by both the government and an NGO. KRIBP

centered on improving the livelihoods of poor farming families through a PRA-based process, Mosse shows that local knowledge made no contribution to the planning stages. Instead, what was presented as local needs was actually shaped by local perceptions of what development organizations were expected to deliver. Mosse (2001:19) discovers that PRA approaches in KRIBP produced knowledge that was heavily influenced by local dynamics of power, authority and gender. In other words, it was shaped by locally dominant groups and project interests. Mosse attributes this to the open-ended nature of PRA. These findings suggest that local knowledge may not always modify project models.

Recent studies on participatory development have begun to prioritize cultural and social aspects. Kassam (2002) introduces the experiences of an NGO (Hundee) of the indigenous Oromo people of Central Ethiopia. Hundee wished to protect its distinct identity and pursue development based on translating Oromo traditions into modern development practices. It adopted strategies to enable communities to understand the causes of their problems and how to solve them. Hundee focused on informing people of their rights and duties within the Ethiopian constitutional framework and consequently, considerable positive changes in Oromo life were achieved. The study of Hundee provides an important example in understanding how local values influence communities to mobilize.

The formation and performance of local organizations or grassroots organizations may be confronted with considerable constraints. Fernando states that familiarity with external institutional systems, how they function, and how they can be addressed, may also pose a challenge to grassroots

organizations. Thomas asserts that even if voluntary organizations were established on the basis of communication and full participation, people with strong characters will still find ways to dominate. In general, decision-making processes within a community may be affected by age, gender, class, and caste or other factors (ODA, 1995). Cleaver supports this view, in arguing that the establishment of criteria for membership in the formation of local organizations does not mean that exclusion, vulnerability, and subordination are overcome, because relations continue to be shaped by certain structural factors that are left unaddressed.

The practice of participatory development has faced various constraints, which certainly influence the outcomes of its interventions. The following section briefly outlines these constraints.

Factors that Influenced People's Participation

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

Development projects are presupposed to contribute to social change. However, they may not benefit all equally; some will profit to a greater degree while others may lose from the process (ODA, 1995). Black argues that the primary beneficiaries of rural development programs are the cities, as development funds typically accrue to where offices are built

and maintained, supplies are purchased, and salaries are earned and spent. There is some concern that if care is not taken, bottom-up development initiatives may result in further 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 or implementing agencies. Bagadion and Korton (1991:73) argue that development agencies usually maintain norms, procedures, policies and attitudes which offer little aid in fostering people's capabilities. Development agencies are seen as responsible for the persistent problem of limited participation, due to the way they operate and their staffing, which renders 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.

At present, international organizations, donors and governments are expressing growing interest in participatory approaches. Blackburn and Holland (1998:1) assert that as these approaches have become institutionalised, new challenges have emerged. These include organizational reforms and alterations to the behavior of professionals and bureaucrats. Hildyard and others (2001:70) explain that if national and international development agencies are serious about sustainability, equity, and poverty reduction, they should give priority to the needs and political development of marginalized and oppressed groups. They propose that development agencies examine their internal hierarchies, training techniques, and office culture, as the functionality of these is 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 institutions underlying a project are authoritarian, rigid, and dominant, an environment of exclusivity will be maintained. In fact, the success of participatory development projects depends on the readiness of donors and implementing agencies to adopt a process approach and delegate clearly outlined responsibilities and decision-making power to local stakeholders as well as the involvement of different related institutions as partner organizations.

Ladbury and Eyben identify four reasons for beneficiaries' lack of contribution to decisions that affect them: economic issues, political issues, professionalism, and the nature of the products. Regarding economic issues, they argue that there is a strong individually based economic rationale for collective action. On the other hand, in political terms, participation will be limited if beneficiaries lack the power to organize and engineer genuine representation. Professionalism is also seen as a barrier to participation, as the culture of specialist sectors such as health does not encourage participation (ODA, 1995:97).

Narayan examines community involvement in 121 rural water supply projects implemented by the World Bank in 49 countries. The study illustrates that participation was conducive to project effectiveness and encouraged a sense of empowerment. The study reveals that the responsiveness of a development agency to communities was what influenced stakeholders' participation. It suggests that people's involvement in the stages preceding implementation influences their commitment to a project, and that the organizational capacity of a community has a bearing on the level and quality of people's participation.

Some development agencies have analyzed their experiences with participatory development identified the obstacles that affected the outcomes. The World Bank (2001a:3) identifies the following constraints to participation in its projects during the period 1994 to 1998: the skepticism of governments regarding participatory approaches; government agencies' limited capacities to engage participation; and communities' lack of training and technical knowledge.

Participation also depends on the availability and distribution of resources, and local access to assets and rights. Even if communities are well organized and motivated, their functionality may still be reduced by limitations such as the inadequacy of resources and the structural framework of local institutions (Cleaver, 2001). Fernando (1995:183) suggests that advocates of participatory development should keep their projects at a pragmatic scale to ensure that the resources reach groups to make significant changes in their lives, rather than expand projects over a large area, which may create frustration at the sense of unproductiveness.

Participation theorists caution that 'participation' may lead to further exclusion of powerless groups and individuals. Development interventions have been accused of being controlled by powerful groups or individuals, and the primary development stakeholders are treated as merely passive beneficiaries. Moreover, in some societies powerless people have long been dominated by powerful elites, and have submitted to the mentality of independence, which has reduced their capability to act and make decisions for themselves, while those who enjoy power and status oppose changes to this situation (Freire, 1970; Mathur, 1995). Participatory

development authors argue that with bottom-up development efforts, it is possible that elite groups may monopolize the benefits of projects, or that field-officers and project leaders may align themselves with certain local groups against the interests of the poor, leading to limited or negative outcomes. Well-informed and powerful individuals thus often influence the process of aid distribution (Fernando, 1995).

The bureaucratic rigidity and conventional systems applied by development agencies have also hindered people's participation. According to Schneider and Libercier (1995b), experience shows that the application of participatory approaches by development organizations has been constrained by many factors. For example, the behavior of development staff were guided by individual incentives, and many did not understand the rationale for participatory strategies. Other restrictions were time and disbursement pressure, and the adoption of a blue print, rather than process, approach.

Claims to participation and empowerment in participatory development could also be driven by particular gender interests, leaving the powerless without opportunity to exercise their voice or choice (Cornwall, 2003:25). Morrisson and Jütting (2005:1065) assert that social institutions, or laws, norms, traditions, and codes of conduct that have existed in societies for centuries, are the single most important factor in determining women's participation in economic activities outside the household. They (2005:1080) also find that gender disparities in involvement in economic activities are relatively higher in Muslim and Hindu majority countries compared to Christian and Buddhist countries. However, there are significant exceptions, which suggest that within the dominant religions, varying interpretations and applications of the

economic role of women are possible. Morrisson's and Jütting's (2005) findings imply that even in settings that are heavily influenced by culture, religion, or economic roles, changes favoring women are possible.

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

Summary

Many analysts argue that the concept of participation in development planning, policymaking and decision sharing has been prominent in documents within the literature, but has not percolated into practice. Participatory development has been repeatedly criticised for not dealing with issues of power and politics and being preoccupied with technical matters, aiming to 'achieve more' rather than empower people. It has been argued that if alternative development strategies are to realise their objectives and foster the empowerment of the local poor, fundamental changes to the status quo and the local power distribution are required, not just limited scattered interventions. The central issue is how and in what form people's participation will manifest. There is further concern about the behavior of professionals and the policies of development providers. It is believed that to empower people, donors and development agencies need to have a clear vision of, comprehensive experience with, and strong belief in participatory concepts.

Both international and national non-governmental organizations have been perceived as the key actors in participatory development. Various real-world experiences have demonstrated how NGOs have developed and employed

numerous approaches. These illustrate how they have been able to engage with stakeholders. Previous participatory development experiences suggest that people's participation can be affected by internal and external factors. Significantly, the alternative development approach has focused on local knowledge both as a source of participation and a way to glean knowledge from local people. In practice the roles, strengths, and essence of indigenous participatory organizations and practices have rarely been explored and utilized in contemporary development interventions.

People's contributions to development through indigenous practices have been largely ignored under the dominant state-led and market-driven approaches. Participatory development studies and practices have tended to devote attention to economic factors, with rare concern for fusing these with cultural and political aspects. Moreover, the literature on participation has focused on externally developed approaches. It has simultaneously neglected to recognize indigenous participatory organizations, approaches, and practices that play an important role in achieving economic, social and human development for Third World people in their local settings. These practices and their potential have been neither explored nor utilized in modern development interventions. In this regard, Chapter Seven discusses the roles of indigenous participatory structures and mechanisms. This aims to offer insight into the local setting and suggest practical ways to enhance the outcomes of development interventions.

5

Sudan Context: Background and Development Efforts

Introduction

The previous chapters have developed a general framework for examining the research topics. This chapter narrows the scope of the study by moving from the wider theme to examine some related issues in Sudan. It provides an introduction to Sudan's politics, economic development and civil society movements; this journey started with independence in 1956 and since then many political changes and development efforts have been undertaken. People's involvement in development interventions is explored in this research through a review of documentary sources along with interviews of research participants from different backgrounds. This chapter also provides a comprehensive framework for the following chapters by examining the basic components that have influenced participatory development within the Sudanese context. It moves gradually from the national scene to grassroots experiences within specific development projects.

The export of oil in Sudan began in 1999, followed by the export of refined oil products and natural gas in July 2000. According to a 2006 government report, 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 (Government of the Sudan, 2006:13). The same report points out that the Sudanese 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 GDP and 15% of exports, and constituting the livelihoods of about 70% of the population. The contribution of agriculture to GDP has declined during the last decade; on the other hand, the oil sector has developed from almost nil to more than 11% of GDP over the same period. As aforementioned, in July 2011 Sudan split into two countries: Sudan and the Republic of South Sudan. However, oil production and revenues remain very important for Sudan and the Republic of South Sudan. According to the International Monetary Fund (EIA, 2011), oil represents over half of government revenue and 90% of export earnings for North Sudan; for South Sudan, oil represented 98% of total revenues. However, the development of the Sudanese oil industry has been constrained by internal conflicts, in particular Darfur (2003-2011), and international sanctions. Furthermore, internal wars have had a significant destructive impact on natural resources and infrastructure, the result of which has influenced the whole development process.

Overall, the present trends of economic growth display a focus on commerce and not production (Pitamber, 2001:3). However, a large part of the national income is consumed by debt repayments and general government consumption, including spending on the military, internal security and excessively large bureaucratic sectors which are unrelated to development (Pitamber, 2001). To understand and analyze development efforts, there is a need to examine the political ideologies of various regimes and the impact of these on development processes. The next section identifies the features that characterize the political system and examines the role of politics in development.

Political System: An Overview

Sudan is one of the countries formerly governed by Britain in Africa. Therefore, liberal constitutional arrangements were made before independence to facilitate the democratic transfer of power. These reforms and arrangements were created with no or little consideration of local political and social structures. They merely served to feed the dominance of political elites who could maintain their links with the former colonial power. The misuse of state power during both colonial and postcolonial periods has been held responsible for generating uneven development. In this regard, the central state relied heavily on the cooperation of local elites and tribal and religious leaders (Abdel-Atti, 2004). Contrary to the expectations of many optimistic analysts, the experience of liberal democracy in independent African countries such as Sudan proved to be short lived (Healey and Robinson, 1992:12). Between the years 1957 and 1964, 1969 and 1984 and from 1989 until now, authoritarian military regimes replaced the liberal democratic ones, creating one-party states. The first military government in 1957 assumed the nationalist ideology that dominated political life before and after independence. The second military government (1969-84) adopted a socialist ideology while the present military government has made a shift towards Islamic ideology. In general, the political performance of democratic regimes in Sudan was poorer than the authoritarian regimes, which could justify public support and acceptance whenever a military coup occurred. 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.' What matters in the formulation of policies are the skills of the political leadership, the structure of decision-making, the role of bureaucracy, the composition of governing coalitions, the relationship of the government to trade unions and business, and the role of external powers, in particular international financial institutions (Healey and Robinson, 1992).

Ethnicity and politics

Sudan's population is seen as one of the most diverse on the African continent. Before the secession of South Sudan, Metz (1991:47) identifies that there were 'about 600 ethnic groups speaking more than 400 languages and dialects.' However, due to drought in 1984/85 and the civil war between the north and the south, large numbers of people migrated to the capital city, and according to Metz (1991), started to speak Arabic, the dominant language of the area. To overcome the challenge of managing diverse communities in the vast area of Sudan, the government thought to adopt a decentralised administrative system. In 1991, Sudan assumed a federal system with nine states, according to 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 reorganized into 26 states. With the independence of South Sudan, Sudan was divided into 15 states (*wilayat*) and maintains a population of 30.9 million. The majority of those who live in these states are Arabic-speaking Muslims. Among these are several distinct tribal groups: the camel-raising *Kababbish* of Northern Kordofan, and the *Jaalileen* and *Shaigeyya* groups of tribes settled along the rivers. There are also the semi-nomadic *Baggara* of

Kordofan and Darfur; the *Hamitic Beja* in the Red Sea area; the Nubians of the northern Nile areas, some of whom have been resettled along the Atbara River; the *Nuba* of southern Kordofan; and the *Fur* in the western regions of the country.

Different people use different terms or criteria to define themselves as members of a group who share specific attributes. Some may recognize that they share common attributes such as religion, language and traditions with other groups, but continue to view themselves as a separate, unique group. In this regard, Metz (1991) refers to the two ethnic groups of *Atuot* and *Nuer* in the South of Sudan (before independence in 2011) who speak the same language and share many common characteristics but identify themselves as distinct groups. Similar situations can be found in most northern groups, such as the *Jaalieen* and *Shaigeyya*. In Sudan, especially in rural areas, there continues to be strong respect for tribal and religious leaders. However, at least until the late 1990s, the names of ethnic groups did not constitute a group's 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 hold traditions which may range between Arab and African cultures, or a mixture of the two. However, in most cases there is no ‘one pure culture,’ but a mixture that differentiates Sudanese culture from others.

Politics and Conflicts

In the post-war 1940s, Sudan witnessed the rise of the nationalist movement as 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. These two parties did not actively seek to involve the southern population. 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 the 1980s, due to the economic hardships that resulted from the implementation of structural adjustment programs, there were popular uprisings against the government. Consequently, in September 1983 the government announced the comprehensive application of *Sharia'a* (Islamic law), aiming to gather support from Islamic parties. Meanwhile, the civil war between the north and the south broke out again, this time led by the Sudan Peoples' Liberation Army (SPLA). At this stage the conflict was constructed around religious differences. The war continued during subsequent regimes and resulted in the displacement of millions of people and the deterioration of living conditions all over the country. In 2002, the Government of Sudan and the SPLA reached an agreement on the role of religion in the state and affirmed the right of southern Sudan to self-determination. In 2004, the Government of Sudan, represented by the National Congress Party, signed a declaration with the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA), committing both to conclude a final comprehensive peace agreement by December 31, 2004. This was formally signed on January 9, 2005, ending a conflict

which had lasted for approximately 21 years. The agreement resulted in the establishment of a new Government of National Unity and the interim Government of Southern Sudan. In 2011, it paved the way for the creation of the South Sudan as a separate state.

In 2003, while the north-south conflict was leading to its resolution, increasing reports of attacks on civilians in the Darfur region began to emerge. This conflict broke out 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 members of the rebel groups were recruited from two or three 'African' sedentary communities such as the *Fur* and the *Zaghawa* tribes. The JEM and SLA rely on their tribes for popular support while simultaneously being allied to national political parties. The SLA is led by a former communist, and has been previously linked to the southern movement (SPLA), while the JEM is led by a former member of the Islamic Front which has since 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 attacks by the JEM and the SLA, the government employed the air force and local armed groups against the rebels. These armed groups have lately become known as the '*Janjaweed*.' Their membership was composed of those who were trained by the Libyan leader (Gaddafi) in the 1980s as part of the latter's political exploits in the region (An-Naim, 2004). In addition to those involved as informal militias are those involved as supporters of both elected and military governments' actions against the SPLA since 1987, as well as

those who suffered from JEM and SLA attack. The distinction between those involved in this conflict has been conceptualized as racial; that is to say, the conflict is dichotomized into Arabs versus Africans. Connell describes involvement in this conflict by stating 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 organized 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 organized way ‘ represent ‘ the Arab tribes in western Sudan’ (Connell, 2004:1).

Hoile (2005) reports that the ‘*Janjaweed*’ were either involved in the previous civil war, took advantage of the present situation, or were those who suffered from rebel attacks. Hoile (2005) describes the initial attack by the rebel groups, which resulted in revenge attacks by nomadic tribes of Arab origin:

‘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 inter-communal 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 refer to the factor of the region’s economic marginalization as a major ground for this conflict. Hoile (2005) questions the impact of underdevelopment and marginalization as a main cause in this war. However, Hoile (2005) and An-Naim (2004) assert that certain national political parties and external forces have had great influence on and stakes in this conflict.

Clearly, the existing economic problems as well as power struggles in the region was what made the rebel movements, and the central government and their allies, act and react aggressively. Unfortunately, it is the civilians of Darfur who have paid the price. The Darfur conflict has affected four million people and displaced about two million (ECHO, 2007:1). Moreover, this conflict has created further ethnic

conflict. After the outbreak of the Darfur crisis and the engagement of tribes in this politicized conflict, the ethnic dimension surfaced. It was observed that people began to identify themselves according to ethnic background and engage in aggressive discussions over ethnicity. At present, many intellectual groups, academic institutions, and the media have begun to raise concerns over the lack of what they term 'a culture of peace.' This concept embodies international concern about the country's future political stability.

Sudan's cultural and geographic diversity constitutes a strong argument in favour of some form of decentralised administration capable of formulating and implementing adequate responses to the varying sets of problems, needs and constraints in diverse regions of the country (Guimaraes, 2005:1). Therefore, various regimes have responded to the country's diversity by implementing structures of regional and local administration. The following section looks at these structures and the factors that have influenced their operation.

Decentralization

Sudan has a long history of decentralized government. The roots of the current federal system go back to the early 1970s, when it was adopted by the May regime (Military Regime 1969-1984). This system was reinforced by the Regional Government Act 1980 (Government of the Sudan, 1997). The act delegated 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 officially recognized by the Sudanese Constitution of 1998, while the Comprehensive Development

Strategy (Government of the Sudan, 1992) supported the decentralization policy.

Decentralization as a concept and practice has received intense interest, and its practice requires people's participation on a wider scale, which is always a challenge to 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 excluding people from decision-making processes (Mathur, 1995). The establishment of a single ruling party, the politicization of civil services, and the tendency to maintain central control over all regions has weakened the local governance system (Manallah, 1998). In Sudan, the regimes traditionally created new organizations on their own initiative as lobbying mechanisms, in order to assume a degree of legitimacy and gain popular support. On the other hand, local communities have developed their own strategic mechanisms by inserting local leaders into these new organizations, rather than assertively confronting the regimes (MAI-SSI /Khartoum).

Al-Hardallu (2002:131) argues that an increase in administration units and the number of localities results in high expenditure. Politicians and bureaucrats at both national and state levels use state power to acquire and allocate resources. Healey and Robinson (1992:25) refer to them as the 'state class' who strive to accumulate wealth and protect themselves from loss of power or status. It also becomes obvious that the role of powerful individuals in state and federal government is to lobby for public resources and services for themselves and their own ethnic group or locality, rather than ensuring the prudence and quality assurance of macro and micro policies. In these circumstances, the political status of individuals becomes

a determining factor in dispersing resources and thus achieving social change. Accordingly, personal connections and tribal entities are rendered key issues.

The indistinct division of power between federal and state government encourages the federal government to encroach on state powers, particularly in relation to land use and management of natural resources. According to the constitution, the *Wali* (State Governor) has the authority to apportion land, but people also have the right to claim land that they have occupied for over ten years. Some specific legislation, such as the Forest Act, grants government departments the mandate for managing and utilizing resources at the national level. Accordingly, the responsibility for natural resources and environmental management is divided between the federal and state governments. The federal government has exclusive jurisdiction over matters relating to minerals, subterranean resources and trans-boundary waters. The detailed regulation of land, state forests, agriculture, animals and wildlife is the state's responsibility but remains subject to federal planning and coordination. The constitution confers the state the responsibility of managing land and forests. Meanwhile, at the state level, powers are transferred to elected local councils which have administrative and financial autonomy to implement development at a local level, which includes planning and regulation of land use and natural resource management.

Decentralization has relieved the national government of certain financial responsibilities as state governments have been required to generate revenue to fund state development plans. To produce funds, state governments resort to extracting from available resources such as land and forest, and increasing

taxes on agricultural products, which can easily result in the misuse of natural resources, thereby increasing the burden of the rural poor. Although the process of decentralization in Sudan has created closer relations between formal authorities and local communities, constraints have also arisen. The ambiguous and confusing division of responsibilities between the federal and state governments has resulted in conflicting policies of land use and the encroachment of federal government upon states' natural resources. Moreover, the lack of technical and financial capacities at state levels has a negative impact on the decentralization processes. These conditions raise concerns and suggestions for reviewing current decentralization policies and legislation, in order to avoid misinterpretation and misapplication.

Modernization and Neoliberal Policies

The colonial government concentrated its development efforts on irrigated agriculture and rail transportation throughout the Anglo-Egyptian condominium. A limited amount of rain-fed mechanized farming was also developed during World War II. At the time of independence, Sudan was considered to be one of the most successful economies in Africa, as the new Sudanese government's principal inheritance was the vast Gezira irrigation scheme and Sudan Railways. Since then, Sudan has adopted different policies to achieve development, some of which have given impetus to a remarkable increase in economic growth, but most of which have failed.

In the 1950s the economy grew rapidly, though remained at a low level, while inflation was absent. The exchange rate of the Sudanese pound was fixed at

approximately one Sudanese pound to 3.53 United States dollars, and both the balance of payments and government funds were generally in good shape (Deng, 2000:6). In the 1960s the economy continued its growth, while inflation and the exchange rate remained stable, but the balance of payments and government funds experienced deficit. This was possibly due to various ambitious national plans of rural development (Al-Hardallu, 2002). The implementation of these was carried out through investment programs drafted annually by specialized government agencies and funded by loans. Investment was at a high rate during the programs' initial years; rising well beyond projected levels, and a number of major undertakings had been completed by the mid-plan stage, 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 funding threatened the continuation of development activities. This situation had deteriorated further by 1967, and the implementation of the Ten-Year Plan was abandoned and eventually formally discarded after the May Regime's military coup in 1969.

In the early 1970s the May Regime adopted a Five-Year Plan of Economic and Social Development for the years 1970 to 1974. This plan, prepared with the assistance of Soviet personnel, sought to achieve the major goals of the May revolution: the creation of an independent national economy; steady growth towards general prosperity; and further development of cultural, educational and health services, using 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 and Kinanah. Roads connecting Khartoum and Port Sudan were also constructed, and excavation began on the Jonglei Canal. By 1987, Chevron discovered the existence of oil in commercial quantities in Sudan.

Despite the May government's aspiring claims regarding development, the rural areas suffered from national policies, as greater emphasis was directed towards agro-export production on large scale-farms and agricultural schemes. Small-scale farms which sustain rural livelihoods were completely neglected. Furthermore, most of the integrated rural development projects did not succeed in achieving their intended objectives. The Sudanese government tried to develop agriculture after the 1970 establishment of large-scale agricultural schemes. However, this resulted in the institution of modern mechanization in local farming systems at the expense of traditional inherited techniques. Hurreiz (1981) argues that these new technologies were imported entirely from outside; this included the equipment, spare parts, and a foreign system that was often unfeasible or difficult to maintain. Gradually, the old system collapsed as the farmers lost touch with traditional ways of agricultural production and the readiness for hard work. Hurreiz notes that what had been an acceptable way of life then became perceived as a burden. Moreover, these agricultural development efforts neither led to increased productivity nor raised the standard of living of the masses in general. Instead, it distorted the economic and social structure of society and undermined traditional values and practices (Ayoub, 1998).

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

1980s the government accepted conditional loans and adopted structural adjustment programs (SAPs), as imposed by the World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF). These reforms promoted trade Liberalization, currency devaluation, privatization, and the removal of subsidies on food, education and health services. The economy was limited in its response to these reform packages. Earnings from public corporations, however, fell short of projections, and the growth in government expenditure greatly exceeded that of government revenue. As a result, the government had to borrow from the Bank of Sudan to cover its expenditure.

The Liberalization and structural reform policies adopted by the state since the 1980s have given rise to the total collapse of the state's economic and social redistributive function (Ibrahim, 2003:18). This was reflected in the poor quality of services and the significant fall, in real terms, of the salaries of public sector employees. The rigid implementation of SAP measures resulted in large-scale unemployment, economic hardship, deepening poverty, and social instability. These policies have further embedded the poverty cycle in which a large segment of the local population was trapped previously. Ibrahim (2003:19) reports that those households who were previously classified as being above a minimum level of subsistence, such as the middle-class, are now continuously falling below that level and are coming to constitute the new poor.

The worsening domestic economic situation was marked by growing inflation. Inflation stemmed in large part from the development financing which incurred deficits, increasing development costs due to worldwide price rises, and rising costs of external capital. At the same time, pressure

mounted for the repayment of external debt as Sudan failed to meet its scheduled payments. In October 1983, the government announced a three-year public investment program, but plans to Islamize the economy in 1984 impeded the implementation of this and after the overthrow of the May regime in April 1984, the program was suspended completely.

In 1987 the elected government initiated an economic recovery program. This program was followed, beginning in October 1988, by a three-year program to reform trade policy, regulate the exchange rate, reduce the budget deficit and subsidies, and encourage exports and privatization. The subsequent military government of 1989 cancelled this program. By 1991, the value of the Sudanese pound against the U.S. dollar had sunk to less than 10 % of its 1978 value, and the country's external debt had risen to US\$13 billion (Institute for Security Studies (ISS), 2005). The ISS (2005:2) relates this condition to the drought and accompanying famine of the 1980s, and the influx of more than 1 million refugees from Eritrea, Ethiopia, Chad, and Uganda in addition to those internally displaced by the continuing war in Southern Sudan who was estimated to number between 1.5 million and 3.5 million. However, according to Abdel-Atti (2002) the decline in Sudan's agricultural and industrial production began before the occurrence of these calamities, and owed more to the fact that few development projects were completed on schedule or succeeded in meeting projected production levels. Consequently, Sudan found itself in a cycle of increasing debt and declining production.

The next section examines the government efforts that aimed to overcome the difficulties and failures of development.

The Present Government's Model for Development

The present military government took power in 1989 and decided to follow a different path from both the Western capitalist and socialist approaches. The model claimed to adopt a form of Modernization which conformed to local and Islamic contexts. This approach did not view Western models as a threat to national identity, but as a model to use and learn from.

In 1992 the government instituted a nationwide Islamic banking system. The Islamic system of finance is based on sharing of profit and loss. The main feature is the prohibition of 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 investing in Sudan. Ibrahim (2003:39) argues that the move towards the institutional financing of the poor can largely be accomplished by profit- and loss-sharing, rather than the provision of credit insurance or guarantee schemes. He 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 comprehensive privatization program and agreed to make token payments on its arrears to the IMF, liberalise exchange rates, and reduce subsidies. According to Deng (2000), the adoption of the economic Liberalization strategy in Sudan was influenced by four factors: 'First, 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. Second, 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. Third, in the early 1990s economic reforms have become a fashion and most countries have rushed to change. Fourth, 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 'aggressive' and resulted in a dramatic increase in the cost of living and poverty levels, especially in rural areas (Pitamber, 2001:12).

The Government of Sudan adopted a ten-year Comprehensive Development Strategy (CDS) from 1992 to 2002. 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 to lead a better quality of life. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) and major creditors were concerned that the government had not sufficiently reduced subsidies on basic commodities to diminish its budget deficit, and in the early 1990s, took the unusual step of declaring Sudan uncooperative because of its non-payment of arrears to the IMF and threatened to expel Sudan from the institution. To avoid economic exclusion, the government developed links with socialist regimes and Southeast Asian countries that provided trade and financial assistance. The government worked with various foreign partners, particularly China and Malaysia, to develop the oil sector. In the mid-1990s, it announced an economic recovery program to encourage the involvement of

the private sector and international investors in the development process. The government passed an investment law, the Investments Encouragement Act (1996), which aimed to increase national income, ensure food security, foster the development of basic infrastructure, implement a policy of national self-sufficiency, and ensure co-operation between Islamic, Arab and African countries. The Act also strove to facilitate 1) easy transfers and remittance of profit and capital costs; 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 facilitate the transfer of funds for investors. Pitamber (2001:13) argues that the objectives and fruits of the Act support those with existing regional and international contacts, involvement in import and export activities, and sufficient funds; this suggests that those currently marginalized in the economy will not be able to assume involvement 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 begun to show recovery symptoms. Sudan's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) increased by 6% in 1999 and inflation fell sharply to 16% after peaking at 166% in 1996. By 2004 the inflation rate was down to 8.8%. The rate of the real growth of GDP for 2004 was 5.9%. This has been attributed to oil exports, which have boosted state income since exports began in mid-1999, and to the IMF's package of reforms initiated from 1997 (ISS, 2005:1). A 2006 IMF report (2006:7) notes that Sudan's real GDP rate grew at an estimated 8% in 2005, and such increased growth has lifted government revenue. The report shows that oil export revenue rose because of higher oil prices, but the

influx of imports also rose dramatically, while non-oil export slowed. The IMF announced that the reforms enacted by Sudan since 1997 without external aid placed Sudan in a good position economically, particularly when compared to other countries experiencing similar situations of post-armed conflict.

Despite some improvements since the late 1990s, the serious problems of widespread poverty, highly skewed income distribution, and the inadequate delivery of social services remain (Al-Hardallu, 2001; Pitamber, 2001; Ibrahim, 2003:32). Studies of the Sudanese economy affirm the rise of the number of those affected by poverty as well as an increase in its incidence and severity particularly during the 1990s (Ministry of Manpower, 1997; Government of the Sudan, 1997). The degree of poverty is measured at 82.7% and 83.1% for rural and urban populations respectively (Ibrahim, 2003:32). According to the Human Development Report, Sudan ranks at 154 out of 169 countries (UNDP, 2011). Based on UNDP classification, the people of these categories of poverty are deprived of decent living standards, which implies a lack of adequate food intake, suitable shelter and clothing, and access to schooling and health facilities, information and technology, and recreation amenities. Evidently, the Sudanese case proves that economic growth does not necessarily translate into better living standards for the majority of the population. As research participants indicate, the conventional view of economic development continues to determine development policies and strategies; participation has been reduced to an instrument to gain popular legitimacy and support. This issue is discussed further in Chapter Nine.

Integrating women into development has lately received attention from the government and from development agencies. New policies of women's involvement in government and civil society organizations have been approved and observed. The next section explores this trend in more detail.

Integrating Women into Development Processes

The government's Comprehensive Development Strategy (CDS) emphasised the fair distribution of resources and opportunities for both men and women. In Sudan the extended family provides social services for various members; the family is responsible for the old, the young, and the sick. In general, it is assumed that women are to bear the burden of these social services alongside their traditional responsibilities, particularly in the rural areas where there is restricted access to services. The Comprehensive Development Strategy addressed women's needs in a separate section, calling for bridging gender disparities by allocating 15% of the development budget to women's programs and 25% of the quota system to ensure women's participation in parliamentary political activities. However, in 2002 the percentage of women in parliament and in social and popular committees was only 10%, in the state councils of the Northern states 5%, 11% in Khartoum state, and 8% in the assemblies of the Southern states. At the national level, the government implemented new rules regarding property rights. The law now even favors women over men in divorce, as land is put under the woman's name or under joint title to land if she is married. The effort to incorporate women in development processes is manifest in the establishment of women development directorates in certain relevant ministries. However, in Sudan the division of labor between women and

men varies from culture to culture and from one economic group to another (Osman (2002:23).

All development projects in Sudan in the 1980s adopted the Women in Development approach (WID) (GCRT, 2003:6). Women's programs were implemented as a component of development projects; these programs essentially focused on utilizing women as a human resource and aimed to satisfy their basic needs in their roles as mothers and housewives. According to the Gender Centre for Research and Training (GCRT) (2003:8), WID was criticized for not rectifying women's positions as influential citizens within society. Therefore, in the 1990s the Government of Sudan, through its Comprehensive Development Strategy and development projects, adopted the concept of Gender and Development (GAD), which is aimed at tackling ingrained customs that impede both male and female development. In this regard, the research participants have challenged some of these traditional perspectives. The following responses collated during field research represented a common view recurring throughout interviews and focus group discussions at the national level. One businesswoman argued that

'In the Sudan, particularly in the cities, we do not experience any oppression or exclusion because of our gender. Unfortunately, our local women NGOs followed the foreigners' organizations 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, travelled abroad to arrange for purchasing some material, and never face any problem. Women have no enough

confidence to develop themselves. These resources, which were wasted in arguing over gender issues, I wish if it were directed to development by now could lift African's women from their misery' (Businesswoman -FGD/ Khartoum).

أكدت الموظفة السابقة بإحدى منظمات الأمم المتحدة قائلة:
نحن في السودان وخاصة في المدن لا نستعبد أو نضطهد أحداً بسبب الجنس، ولكن المنظمات غير الحكومية ظلت تردد على مسامعنا ما تقولُه المنظمات الأجنبية التي تدعي أن هناك إضطهاد للمرأة. أنا مثلاً أملك بعض المصانع والمؤسسات وأديرها، وأسافر خارج السودان ولا أتعرض للمضايقات، ولكن النساء ليس لديهن الجرأة الكافية لتطوير أنفسهن. إن الموارد التي تصرف على مناقشة قضية الجندر يمكن أن تتخذ النساء الأفريقيات من الوضع السيئ الذي يعشن فيه.

A female academic with previous experience working in rural areas explained:

'Most of those women who hold senior political and administrative jobs at national level 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, instead of travelling in and out, they should go there and make real contribution to change that situation' (Female academic/ Khartoum).

إحدى الأكاديميات ذات الخبرة السابقة في العمل الريفي، أوضحت قائلة: معظم النساء اللاتي يتقلدن الوظائف السياسية والإدارية العليا لم يقدمن نماذج جيدة وليس لديهن إهتمام بقضايا المرأة، وما زالت المرأة الريفية تعاني بسبب الأمية وإنعدام الخدمات، وإذا تغير الحال سوف تستمتع بنفس الفرص التي يستمتع بها سكان الحضر. المنظمات المحلية عليها الذهاب إلى الريف والمساهمة في التغيير بدلاً عن السفر والتجوال في الداخل والخارج

These responses raise important issues, especially the role and contribution of educated women and women's education in general. Moreover, they question the perspectives and input of external development providers. When organizations seek to address gender-based inequality in development programs in Sudan's rural areas, they are hindered by the fact that the majority of women lack sufficient time and educational accomplishments (Osman, 2002).

In general, the outcomes of various development efforts were influenced by multiple factors. Yet primarily, the civil war and internal conflicts are considered to be key constraints for development, in increasing the burden and suffering of all people, but especially women, in the affected areas. At the national level there is growing recognition of the need for peace and development; accordingly, the people of Sudan viewed the 2004 negotiation process between the government and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM) with high hopes and expectations. As 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 favored the south more than the north, but people contently accepted that. It was seen as a peace price; people were tired of conflicts and suffering' (Academic / Khartoum).

في السودان، لم يزيد الناس قرارات الحكومة بخصوص
إنفاذية السلام مع الجنوب وساد اعتقاد بأنها إنحازت للجنوبيين، ولكنهم
اعتبروها ثمناً للسلام، إذ أنهم تعبوا من المعاناة والصراعات

Having introduced the main features that have characterized and influenced development policies since independence, the following section identifies several outcomes of the peace agreement that are directly related to this study.

Framework for Peace and Development

The framework for Sustained Peace, Development and Poverty Eradication in Sudan was launched after the central Sudanese government and the SPLA signed a permanent cease-fire agreement in January 2005 ending the civil war. This paved the way for a comprehensive peace accord. I had the opportunity to attend several workshops and meetings to discuss this framework, which were sponsored by the government, the UNDP and national NGOs. These were attended by government officials, academics, civil society organizations and development policy analysts, who came together to discuss many issues related to development and poverty eradication. Observation of the pattern of high economic growth and widespread poverty cautions against a development model predicated solely on economic growth. In fact, all conventional concepts of development are being challenged. There appears to be a degree of consensus centered on issues such as economic growth, increased productivity,

technological advancement and popular inclusion, which aim to raise the standards of living of the broad masses. In this regard, the workshop participants raised debt relief, the use of oil revenues and decentralization as matters of interest. The participants also questioned the actual levels of NGO participation in the development process, querying how genuinely widespread ownership of the framework really was. The government's commitment to democracy and the peace process between North and South Sudan in 2004 have given rise to further opportunities and hope. Civil society organizations have gained greater freedom to speak and evaluate central and local state policies and performance; however, after the secession of South Sudan and its formation as a new state in 2011, many administrative arrangements remained unclear.

To have a comprehensive idea of the roles and contributions of NGO, the following section examines the current nature and potential of civil society organizations.

Civil Society Organizations

The right to freedom of association is generally recognized as a crucial element in achieving social justice and economic progress (Egger, 1995:101). In relation to this, Sudanese law creates no legal obstacles to the right to association and guarantees people's right to form organizations. Since the passing of the Societies Registration Act in 1957 and up to the 1980s, registered NGOs were largely confined to charity and relief works (Sudan Government, 1997).

For the time being, there are different forms of community organizations. Based on their ideological background and roles, they can be classified into five

categories. Firstly, there exist socially-oriented organizations which focus on providing social and public services, such as adult education and health services in both urban and rural areas. Secondly are the politically-affiliated organizations which appear neutral, but in reality are supported and funded by political parties, and which operate as social service providers. Thirdly, there are the trade unions (work-based organizations), while fourthly, are the academic and technically-oriented organizations existing in the capital cities which possess research or academic institutions. Finally, there are religious organizations that offer both social services and spiritual support. All these forms of organizations exist at national and regional levels, while at grassroots level there are only social and religious organizations.

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 all of those engaged in work to belong to the category of 'workers' irrespective of their specialization. According to Sudan's First National Human Development Report (1998), in 1989 the government dissolved all trade unions and passed a new law governing the structure and activities of trade unions; as a result the number of unions decreased from 104 to 26 throughout the 1990s. The contradictions in interests have influenced the unions and largely transformed them into political organizations controlled, co-opted or suppressed by the government (Mohammed, 2001:55). This could be due to the fact that throughout Sudan's political history, trade unions have played an important part in changing the military regimes. The present government has constructed protective measures aimed at

reducing or controlling the role of trade unions, particularly in the political arena. Meanwhile, other organizations, whether technical or social, enjoy a reasonable degree of freedom. For example, national NGOs have their own linkages with international NGOs, development agencies, and donors. Different organizations are involved in partnership or have relationships with external institutions, with each partner having its own interests and expertise.

Theoretically the Comprehensive Development Strategy (CDS) focused on creating self-reliance and satisfying human needs for dignity and freedom in balance with the advancement of economic, social and cultural life emanating from Sudan's national heritage. In order to achieve this, the strategy referred to the need to mobilize the Sudanese people and forge new partnerships between the government, NGOs, grassroots organizations and the private sector. The CDS also states that 'social development is a joint effort involving the government and citizens'; theoretically this means that people have the right to fully participate in decision-making processes in different ways. This strategy calls for greater involvement of people in all fields of development. However, it seems that what has been advocated by CDS was not adopted in practice. The Sudan Human National Development Report (1998) points out that the laws governing NGOs make it difficult for NGOs to register, although they have managed to survive and achieve some of their objectives.

In 1979 the government (during the May Regime) established the Sudan Council of Voluntary Agencies (SCOVA) to undertake the following: 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 regional and international levels. SCOVA remains functional in the current government but with an altered agenda. SCOVA records show that there are 400 member organizations (interview, 2008). 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 with those that believe in participation and are interested in building relations with local NGOs rather than with government institutions. The failure of NGOs to establish any form of effective network among themselves has had significant influence on their performance and outcomes. This results in the wasting of time and opportunities to make important contributions to improving the living standard of the majority, who lack the skills and knowledge to initiate interventions and the contacts to access resource providers.

After signing the peace agreement between the North and the South of Sudan, in January 2005 the government created more opportunities for civil society organizations to develop greater relationships with international NGOs and donors. It also allowed political parties to resume work and trade unions were formed again, in what appears to be democratic processes. However, there are concerns regarding the transparency of the election process. The critical question is whether these NGOs are capable of playing a significant role in development interventions. In practice, most civil society organizations are not engaged in governance or local community issues and mainly work at a central level. . During the last three decades, there have been many NGOs whose

names have been linked with certain powerful people or political parties and even professional NGOs have been unable to escape this trap.

The government established the Humanitarian Aid Commission to oversee all humanitarian organizations and to commit to the removal of obstacles to their work. However, from time to time the government suspends some international NGOs and local non-profit groups operating in different parts of the country. Government reports accuse these organizations of not complying with regulations. On the other hand, non-profit organizations frequently complain that the government interferes with their work and imposes many restrictions. On 20 February, 2006, Members of Parliament passed the Organization of Humanitarian and Voluntary Work Act, 2006, which replaced the Humanitarian Aid Commission Act. Amnesty International views the new Act as a way of exercising power over NGO operations.

National and regional organizations are almost non-existent at the grassroots level, particularly in North Kordofan and the White Nile States where this research was conducted. In Sudan, both national and regional NGOs are generally unknown to ordinary people in rural areas, the places where NGOs can be most useful. Despite the large number of national and regional NGOs, it appears that rural people are unaware of their existence. People who are not involved, either directly or indirectly, with these NGOs have criticized their trends, members' behavior and connections with outsiders. Research participants from different backgrounds, including journalists, academics and specialists, have recorded these perceptions:

‘The civil society organizations 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 organizing workshops and meetings. In fact, being a civil society activist is a very profitable job' (MJ-SSI/ Khartoum).

مجتمعات المجتمع المدني تسيطر عليها النخب، لقد أصبحوا موظفين دائمين بها، يعيشون فيالعاصمة ويتكلمون اللغات الأجنبية ولديهم مقدرة فائقة على إقامة السفنارات والإجتماعات .

'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 organize 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/ Khartoum).

أعضاء المنظمات الطوعية أشبه بالجواسيس ويعملون ضد بلادهم ودائماً يبحثون عن منافعهم الشخصية، يستأجرون أفضل المنازل، يقودون السيارات ويسافرون إلى الخارج، اعتقد أنهم يعرفون ما تريده المنظمات الأجنبية فهم ممتازون في الشكوى وانتقاد الحكومة، ولا أحد يجرؤ على إنتقادهم

'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 organizations 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/ Khartoum).

أضحت المنظمات الطوعية إحدى مشاكل هذا البلد، فهم يدعون إهتمامهم بقضايا التنمية ولكنهم في حقيقة الأمر يدعمون هذا الحزب أو ذلك. لقد أصبحت معظم المنظمات الطوعية مؤسسات شخصية يديرها بعض الأفراد لأكثر من عقدين من الزمان

‘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 organizations. NGOs members’ concern is to travel abroad, attend conferences and tell lies about their home country’ (FAD-FGD/ Khartoum).

أصبحت المنظمة غير الحكومية مؤسسة تجارية ومصدراً للدخل وتضم مجموعة من الأفراد تعرف كيف تتواصل مع المنظمات العالمية، وهمهم السفر إلى الخارج وحضور المؤتمرات ونشر الأكاذيب عن بلادهم

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

Debate about development strategies and previously implemented interventions is very intensive. In practice, development efforts have been negatively affected by many constraints, which have perpetuated wide-scale poverty, frustration and unrest. The following section identifies the factors that have influenced the country’s development processes.

Factors that Influenced Development Processes

The current debate on development surrounds the economic crisis in Africa, especially that of the low-growth economies. Ghai (1987:110), in his analysis of the economic growth of several sub-Saharan African countries, identifies Sudan as one of those that showed an extremely low performance in terms of commercial food production from rain-fed and irrigated land, despite its high economic potential. Ghai relates Sudan's poor performance during the period 1960 to 1983 to several different factors. Firstly, political instability: the country experienced frequent regime changes had to deal with an influx of refugees from neighbouring countries, primarily from Ethiopia and Chad. Sudan also experienced civil war during this period. Secondly, economic policies: increasing overvaluation of the currency, increased taxes on cotton, and the deterioration of irrigation in the Gazira scheme, have combined to result in declining production and exports. This led to a severe scarcity of foreign exchange, which had adverse consequences on the availability of essential goods and services, the rise of 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 the misappropriation of resources became a dominant feature of the economy. Chidzero (1987:136) adds the following factors which influenced all African countries: the manipulation of exchange and interest rates by several major developed countries, which has affected the capacity of poor countries to import capital goods and technology; and secondly, the issue of debt. In general, Sudan has struggled with a high and ever-rising external debt burden since the late 1970s. In 2006,

external debt levels reached US\$ 27.7 billion, of which US \$24.4 billion was in arrears (IMF, 2006:14).

At present, more factors have emerged to influence development and people's capacities to significantly contribute to alleviating underdevelopment.

Diversity of Ethnic and Political Groups

The rise of authoritarianism in African countries explains the persistence of ethnic divisions, weak political institutions, a shallow sense of nationhood, and limited administrative and technical capacities (Healey and Robinson, 1992:41). The diversity of ethnic and political groups in Sudan has rendered economic development, especially at the policy-making level, highly politicized. Sudan has a largely rural population, who retain ideologies and social realities, such as tribal identity, which are not readily abandoned and do not run counter to the concept of national identity (Shahi, 1981:39). The last two decades in Sudan have witnessed a sharp rise in the intense use of the concept of marginalization to refer to economically, socially, and politically marginalized people and regions. Recently, rebel movements in Darfur and the Red Sea areas used marginalization as a justification for their war against the government. In Sudan ethnic and personal relations tend to influence the allocation of resources and development processes. These ethnic and political conflicts are not, however, controlled by illiterates and ignorant people, but by highly educated and professional people who are often guided by personal interests and supported by tribal and external powers (MA-SSI/ Khartoum).

Political Corruption

According to Healey and Robinson (1992), parties of a nationalist or other ideological nature in Sub-Saharan Africa have become entrenched political monopolies that reward their members and supporters in the form of services, employment and training. Many others, who are sufficiently qualified, educated, or in need of services have been excluded or not accorded fair opportunities. Political and ethnic forces influence hiring and firing processes, even for many professional posts. Individual leaders are supported by an administrative class, which preserves its power through patronage networks in which supporters receive opportunities in the form of jobs and resources, in return for loyalty (Healey and Robinson, 1992:42). Overall, within Sudanese communities there is unequal access to and control of resources, and limited participation in political and economic institutions.

The performance of the Sudanese economy has been ultimately dependent on the political ideology of the ruling regime. Therefore, its development crisis may be conceived as largely political in nature. Urban elites, sectarian leaders, tribal chiefs, and their adjuncts have dominated economic and political power (Al-Hardallu, 2001:130). Those selected by the ruling party to lead national or state governments are either members of that party or traditional leaders who the government can seek alliance with. No political regime, especially the military ones, can govern by force alone and in isolation from local communities. Therefore, they obtain legitimacy by adopting acceptable mechanisms and creating new forms of organization to attract popular support, such as the Social Unions of the May Regime (1969-1984), and the

Popular Committees during the Salvation Regime (1989-until the present). These are strategies of monopolizing political activity by using participation as a slogan and thus lobbying people (MA-SSI /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 official institutions (Manallah, 1998). In Sudan, the ruling and opposition parties typically target the leaders of powerful tribes and strive to gain their support. Manallah (1998:222) illustrates that rural elites have benefited from the military regimes' interest in cultivating public support, as the latter have attained this by lobbying local leaders. Even Sudan's democratic governments sought voter support through the channels of traditional leaders. 'Those leaders could be highly educated or have limited abilities and skills' (MAI-SSI /Khartoum).

It seems that it is not only the government and political parties who rely on local leaders to preserve power or gain supporters, but some development agencies have also adopted similar approaches to achieve various objectives. Development agencies normally choose to initially approach communities through their leaders and then continue to implement their programs through this channel, despite the possibility of or actual evidence of corruption and oppression by these leaders (MA-SSI/ Khartoum).

Furthermore, the technical capabilities and behavior of development professionals may contribute to the poor performance and lack of responsiveness to programs. Regardless of whether they are male or female, professionals

are accused of not being responsive or dedicated, while their knowledge is perceived as not being 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/ Khartoum).

المجتمع السوداني مجتمع فريد فالمؤسسة الإجتماعية أقوى من الدولة وتعمل من خلال نظم تقليدي إستشاري، ومشكلتنا الأساسية تتمثل في الذين تعلموا في الغرب، إذ أنهم يعيشون في عزلة ولم يتواصلوا مع المجتمعات المحلية ليستفيدوا من تجاربها المتراكمة.

Education System and Technical Capacities

The government’s educational policies since the 1990s have neglected elementary education to focus on higher education, while economic policies have resulted in commercializing both health and education services. The number of private schools and health clinics is increasing in the capital Khartoum, to replace public services. Access to these private facilities is governed by the factor of income (Pitamber, 2001:18). This situation puts greater pressure on the poor majority of the population who lack the financial resources to send their children to school or allow them to continue their education. This directly influences the contribution of the mainstream population to social or economic development initiatives.

The quality of education in rural schools has deteriorated due to a shortage of teachers and books. As families must pay for primary and secondary level education, this makes it difficult for poor families to send all their children to school or fund the continuation of their schooling. A national report discusses government achievements in the education system, which has been primarily concerned with the university level; twenty-one new universities were opened in different parts of Sudan (Government of the Sudan, 1997:84). Some analysts question the feasibility of opening a new university in a region where there remains a high illiteracy rate. The government has adopted various criteria for admission to universities such as giving special preferences to the children of academics and politicians. This policy deprives many competent students the chance to pursue higher education or specialised career paths. Moreover, continual amendments to the curriculum and the disappearance of subjects which attend to the values of collective participatory work, solidarity and nationhood, has engineered new attitudes and what is locally termed 'commercial education.' Rapid investment in higher education has led to a proliferation in the number of educated university graduates who lack technical skills. Furthermore, this policy has not been accompanied by appropriate strategies to obtain the maximum benefits from the policy, which has resulted in an increasing number of unemployed graduates (Pitamber, 2001:16). Most graduates of the new universities have refused to return to their rural areas and become involved in traditional employment. This indicates that education by itself is not the answer to the problem of underdevelopment.

Lack of Technical and Organizational Skills

The absence of links between government authorities and ordinary people has many disadvantages. It has led to limited development achievements, the deterioration and misuse of resources, as well as the corruption and embezzlement of public funds, which have all entered into general practice (Al-Hardallu, 2001). Corruption and the misuse of public resources are made worse when there are no moral responsibilities or confident, transparent civil organizations with the capability to oversee and assess the performance and behavior of officials. The lack of relationships between ordinary people and official authorities may also be an intentional practice, aimed at keeping the public unaware of realities. In general, Sudanese people, working through grassroots organizations, have shown a high level of responsiveness to development initiatives. This results in the establishment of many service centers such as clinics, schools and community development centers. Manallah (1998) asserts that most health and community development projects initiated by the government conclude government involvement at the stage of opening ceremonies. There are no plans and commitments from different partners, such as the government and financially able community organizations, to operate and sustain these activities. This is especially problematic when the resulting projects and their philosophies introduce new ideas of which the community has no previous experience. In some communities, such as the Gazira scheme, where the levels of education and organizational skills are relatively high, most public services are implemented and managed for decades by communities through local organizations, without or with minimal government support.

Summary

This chapter discussed Sudanese politics and the changes that have been experienced since independence in 1956. It examined various governments' efforts to achieve development, and discussed Sudan's civil society movements and their capacity to contribute to development processes. The Sudanese political structure encompasses the federal government, state, locality and administrative unit levels. Successive coups, with only three to four years of intervening democratic government, have become an institutional mechanism for political succession. Despite the move towards decentralization in 1970, the practice of the one party system has distorted systems of local governance. Regarding development, Sudan has adopted numerous development policies; various regimes have had ambitious programs with special emphasis on agricultural development, except for the current government, which initiated focus on oil exploitation and commerce.

At present, the government adopts liberalization and free market policies, which have been widely perceived as aggressive, as they raise the poverty level and create further suffering. The federal government has advocated the concept of participatory local governance. However, this does not appear to be practically applicable as the central government faces internal and external challenges: civil war in Darfur, international pressure and undeclared sanctions, and corruption. On the other hand, international development agencies significantly rely on national NGOs to influence state policies and lead change. They spend a great amount of resources on mobilizing and fostering the capacities of local NGOs, particularly those at national level. Meanwhile, most of NGOs,

despite their large numbers and favorable access to resources, have made no significant contribution to development processes and are largely unrecognized by ordinary people.

During the last decade, debate on Sudan's national crises has primarily focused on political, constitutional, cultural and peace issues. Since 2005 and the conclusion of the peace agreement between the government and Sudan People's Liberation Army, more attention has been devoted to development and ways of overcoming underdevelopment and poverty. In order to identify ways to promote development processes and encourage popular participation in development interventions, there is a need to learn from previous experiences and acquire deeper knowledge about local communities and their ways of living, thinking, and responding to continual changes.

The Experience of the White Nile Agricultural Services Project

Introduction

Chapter Five described how state policies have shaped development interventions and influenced the level of ordinary people's participation. After examining the national development trends, we will further explore and analyze the detailed experiences of development projects at grassroots levels. Specifically, this chapter aims to identify the factors that influenced people's participation in and the outcomes of projects. It draws on the findings of the secondary case study, the White Nile Agricultural Services Project.

The International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) agreed to support the existing agricultural schemes in the White Nile State of Sudan by promoting 'participatory self-help' and 'women in development' approaches. In this case study, I focus on the project components which adopted participatory approaches or sought community participation. Because the White Nile project was phased out in 2001, very limited records were available from the IFAD central unit, while much of its staff and documented achievements were no longer existent. The most important development players in the project were the local community organizations and primary participants, who expressed their willingness to participate in the research and have their experiences recorded. Additionally, key participants of this research also came 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. Semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions were used to gather data from those participants.

This chapter begins by introducing the White Nile Agricultural Services Project (WNASP) and describing the socio-economic setting in the White Nile State. Subsequently, the approaches, interventions, and outcomes of the project are examined. The factors that influenced the project's participatory development process are the subject of the next section. The final section summarizes and concludes the chapter.

The Project Context

IFAD has worked in Sudan since 1979, funding 14 projects for a loan amount of US\$ 186.5 million (IFAD, 2006:1). The IFAD program in Sudan has been shaped by government policies and priorities. The organization supported government efforts to promote decentralization, self-reliance and strengthen local governance (IFAD, 2006:2). Part of this assistance was provided to implement the White Nile Agricultural Services Project (WNASP). The WNASP was implemented by both IFAD and the Government of Sudan and supervised by the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS). Its main objective was to facilitate the transformation 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 designed to create independent tenants capable of acting as entrepreneurs (IFAD, 2002b: 4). These objectives comply with the Government of Sudan's policy of

privatization (IFAD, 2002b: 5), as part of the overall Liberalization framework. Within this structure, farmers' associations are expected to cater for public services in their villages, by providing schools, health services and youth clubs (SAM-SSI/ Kosti).

IFAD implemented the WNASP during the period 1996-2001. The total estimated cost of the project amounted to US\$ 14.9 million. The project was jointly financed by IFAD, the Government of Sudan, the beneficiaries, the Agricultural Bank of Sudan (ABS) and the Farmer Commercial Bank (FCB). IFAD's contribution was loan-based. To rehabilitation programs, 56% of funding was allocated, aimed at improving irrigation systems and increasing productivity (table 6.1). IFAD proposed a new financial strategy for the White Nile Agricultural Schemes that concerned micro-credit provided by the national banks and 19% of project funding was allocated for this purpose. The project was located within the irrigated areas of the White Nile State. IFAD, the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, and the Ministry of Finance and National Economy made the decisions about the type of interventions that would be supported and where. For example, they governed the selection of project sites, activities and operational policies. The main criterion, which was mentioned in the appraisal report, was that no schemes with more than 550 farmers would be included (IFAD, 1996). However, this criterion was violated in two schemes in which there were approximately 900 farmers each (UNOPS, 2001:4). A senior agricultural manager justified this transgression by appealing to the needs of these particular schemes, as all the communities in the White Nile State were classified as poor (SAM-SSI, Kosti). 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 in order to select eligible schemes (IFAD, 2002b: 6).

Table 6.1: Various Components Cost

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

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

Based on the project objectives, various activities were planned and 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 the Agricultural Bank of Sudan (ABS) and the Farmer Commercial Bank (FCB), who provided credit for crop production, income-generating activities for women and the purchase of 24 tractors.
- The strengthening of extension services by providing means of transport (four vehicles and six motor cycles) and audio-visual equipment, and hiring 68 village extension agents.
- The improvement of the seed multiplication program.
- The enhancement of adaptive research for existing crops and for proposing new ones in the area.
- The support of community forestry.
- The provision of educational and income-generating opportunities to women in the project area who were comparatively disadvantaged and did not have access to the services and support of existing programs.

Throughout the project's duration, varying forms of organizational structure were adopted. The following section explains these changes and their impacts.

The Organizational Structure

The project's organizational structure had two phases; the first phase was applied between 1996 and 1999 and the second phase was implemented from May 1999 until the project's completion. This change was 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 became the WNASP Board of Directors, which included four farmers' representatives selected by the farmers' unions in addition to the Minister of MAAI and representatives from the federal Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry. Before the restructuring of the project's organization and management, the representatives of the 'beneficiaries' comprised only two members (SGO-SSI/ Kosti).

The presence of the project staff in the sites was believed to increase the level of people's participation. The project records display more achievements during the last three years (1999-2001). The key informants of the research viewed the new organizational structure as more effective, as it located the senior management staff on the project site, increased local representatives and facilitated administrative and supervisory procedures. However, the new organizational structure could have been made more effective if relevant state ministries, women's groups and financial institutions (ABS and FCB) were also involved.

The project staff consisted of twenty agricultural specialists, seven of whom were women. All staff, with the exception of one consultant, was Sudanese, and hence was presumably familiar with the local Sudanese culture, which is shaped by the dominance of social relations and personal interaction.

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

The White Nile Setting

According to Davies (1986), the original inhabitants of the White Nile state were Nilo-Hamites from the Southern part of Sudan and western Sudan. In the twelfth century A.D. Arabs began to arrive. Some of the original inhabitants mixed with them and adopted their traditions especially that of nomadic, while some left the region to progress southward. At present, the *Kawahla* are the most dominant group; they are divided into three main tribes: the *Kawahla* (who retain the original name of the group), the *Hassaniya* and the *Husseinat*. In addition, there exist the *Jaalieen*, who are also divided into small tribes such as the *Showeihat*, *Kurtan*, and *Magdlya*. There are also many other tribes that do not belong to the above tribes, such as the *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 the establishment of irrigated agricultural schemes, this situation started to change. However, animal-raising continues to be practiced by the majority of the rural population.

The White Nile State covers an area of 30,411 Square Kilometers. Its inhabitants are largely dependent on rain-fed and irrigated agriculture. The development of an irrigated pump scheme in the White Nile State began in 1937 when the irrigation schemes created a shift in local farming systems. There are now a variety of crops; the long-cultivated staple cash crop of cotton, and subsistence crops such as sorghum and

vegetables. The potential of the state for development can factor in the availability of water and agricultural land, the deep-rooted traditions of the people reinforced by the development of the cheese industry since 1908, and the close proximity to Greater Khartoum and the towns of the Gezira, which require uninterrupted supplies of meat, milk, and milk products for survival (Abdalla, 1975). The existence of irrigation schemes has led to the creation of semi-formal organizations, such as Farmers' Unions and the Production Councils, which have resources and links to state and financial institutions. However, evidence shows that these semi-formal organizations are neither trusted by the populace nor effective, which has led people to create non-formal groups, such as educational and religious committees, to run their affairs. These groups, many of which are run by men, provide services to the community in the form of managing educational and religious affairs. Women, on the other hand, are involved in participatory saving funds and social groups. These grassroots associations are much more localized and work independently; most do not have links with regional and national civil society organizations or 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 typically small in size, accommodating between 300 and 900 families. Each scheme was formed of a village surrounded by agricultural land, and the total number of farmers in each scheme ranged from 60 to 950. The area is characterized by high illiteracy rates of more than 76% (IFAD, 2002b: 10), and it also suffers from a lack of physical infrastructure, underdeveloped roads, weak markets and poor social services.

Earnings from rural activities are restricted by the particular harvesting times of agricultural crops, while employment opportunities often do not exist for young men or those with families to support. However, women are not expected to find jobs outside the schemes or provide money for their families' survival, as this is considered a man's responsibility, whether his role is as a husband, father, brother or close relative. The White Nile State is an example of rural-out migration whereby after the harvest, all men leave the villages, except for a few elders and those managing local businesses, such as traders. In general, the local government of the White Nile State has reinforced and legitimized the domination of power by local elites, often tribal leaders.

In each scheme a number of community organizations existed. Some were semi-formal, such as the Farmers' Unions, Board of Directors of schemes and the Village Popular Committee, while others were informal, such as educational and religious committees and the women's *Sandug*. The semi-formal organizations had links to the government. Competition, rather than collaboration, between these semi-formal organizations is a common feature in the White Nile State. In some cases, there has been tension and conflict within organizations and communities. Generally, there are widespread similarities between various schemes in terms of socio-economic conditions and the physical environment. The only identifiable difference is in relation to the tribal mix of those involved, with some schemes accommodating people from various tribes while others included one group only. Based on this condition and for the purposes of this research, the schemes have been divided into two categories of communities: homogeneous and heterogeneous. Two schemes,

one from each of these categories, were selected at random to analyze 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 are referred to as '*Um-Ahani*' and '*Wad-Ashana*'.

Um-Ahani accommodated 900 families and six different tribes: *Wad-Ashana*, *Bani Garar*, *Falata*, *Um-Ahani*, *Masadab* and *Macadamia*. In *Um-Ahani* there existed an *Umda* (locality headman), *Sheikh* (village headman) and grassroots organizations such as the Village Popular Committee, Cooperative and Farmers' Union. There is also a Board of Directors which supervises agricultural services and coordinates their structure with the State Government. As explained previously, these local organizations existed in each scheme. In *Um-Ahani* 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's education policy and its withdrawal of subsidies from schools, the *Um-Ahani* 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 has been observed that the collapse of the school occurred during the project's duration. This raises concerns about the impact of the development project that was supposed to contribute directly to the improvement of living conditions in the area and support the privatization process. It also questions the validity and effectiveness of the self-help approach in extremely poor communities. The project was designed to enhance local wellbeing and strengthen grassroots

organizations to enable them to sustain public services. In fact, communities in many parts of Sudan did manage to sustain their public services, albeit at lower levels than when the government undertook active involvement prior to the privatization policies adopted in the 1990s. Apparently, the case of *Um-Ahani* scheme is quite unique. Research participants indicated that local wealthy families, who are made up of a particular 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 instead. Most of the poor families could not afford similar new expenses and their sons merely withdrew.

The deterioration of community buildings and public services and lack of commitment and obligation to the entire community was attributed, by research participants, to conflicts over power and the existence of multiple different ethnic groups in small village areas, a lack of government responsiveness and poverty. For example, during fieldwork it was observed that the girls' primary school was almost destroyed by heavy rain. According to research participants, neither the scheme's local organizations (Board of Directors or Farmers' Unions) nor the state authorities responded to the teachers' reports of the incident or requests for assistance. One of the teachers related:

'Look at our school, eight classrooms without roof. We talked to the leaders of local organizations 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 Um-Ahani).

أنظري إلى مدرستنا، بها ثمانية فصول من دون سقف، لقد
أخطرنا قيادات المنظمات المحلية واعتذروا بسبب قلة الموارد. نحن
نعلم أنهم يأخذون مبالغ كبيرة من صندوق دعم الزراعة ومن الوزارة
الإتحادية، وقد رفعنا الأمر إلى مكتب التعليم ولم يفكروا في زيارتنا،
فأني محاولة لطلب المساعدة منهم هي إهدار للوقت، والآن طلابنا
يدرسون تحت الأشجار التي زرعوها بمساعدة المشروع قبل ثمانية
أعوام.

The teachers revealed that they organized a fundraising program for the school's reconstruction after being 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 with the WNASP's support. Five of the teachers who participated in this focus group discussion revealed that they were involved in the project's programs of micro-credit and training. They believed that schools in the schemes were an efficient channel through which development projects and relief agencies could reach most in the community. This meant that through teachers and students, development providers could reach the rest of the community and inform them about events, announcements or news. Schools in rural areas could constitute a stimulating and supportive environment for development efforts. Awareness campaigns could be organized to involve all groups, whether rich or poor, powerful or powerless. Messages could be

dispersed from there. In fact, rural schools also provide 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 in the communities are the teachers, who may be outsiders, and I observed that many communities tried to encourage the teachers who came from outside to stay permanently in the villages by offering them houses, farms and marriage arrangements.

Another scheme that was randomly selected from the group of schemes identified as homogeneous was *Wad-Ashana*. *Wad-Ashana* contains 400 families, all belonging to a single tribe. The scheme covers a total land 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 may explain the high literacy levels among women, as the existence of schools in the village encourages families to enroll their daughters. The Popular Committee estimated the literacy levels among women in the scheme to be at 80%. There is also a University Graduates Union with 80 members (MPC-SSI, /Wad-Ashana). Despite these high literacy levels however, women were not active participants in local organizations.

The socio-economic environment of the White Nile State is underlined by ethnicity and gender structures, which influences community representation, power relations and the allocation of resources. Having described this context, the next section examines some issues relevant to the WNASP's design and participatory approaches, and examines the nature of interactions between the people and the project.

The Project Mechanisms

The WNASP design emphasized 'participation' as a tool for implementing development interventions through the establishment of direct links between local government agencies and finance institutions, such as the State Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Resources and Irrigation, the Agricultural Bank of Sudan and the Farmer Commercial Bank. The project employed similar approaches and interventions in all the schemes. The funding of agricultural operations by IFAD was intended to strengthen the local organizations in order to replace their former funding by the state. This approach therefore pursued the participatory concepts that supported the policy of market-led development. This meant that the project's function of strengthening community organizations aimed to support the wider political and economic agenda (Schneider, 1999) adopted by the government. Practically, the project strategy was dependent on a 'self-help approach' that sought locals' contributions in cash or in labor. This was designed to enhance efficiency and effectiveness and to reduce the operational costs of the project. It was also intended to empower the farmers' organizations, which were then expected to take over the development responsibilities in their area and hence contribute to the national privatization process (UNOPS, 2001:2). This would explain why IFAD chose to involve local community groups in a rehabilitation program, which entailed the rehabilitation and replacement of old water pumps in the area, which had previously been a government task. The program also focused on cultivating people's contribution in other supportive activities, such as agriculture extension.

The central element of the project was the implementation plan, which clearly pre-defined the activities that would follow. During this stage, the field workers played a crucial role in working closely with the villagers. These activities and their outcomes were apparently monitored in great detail (UNOPS, 2001). The reports on these offered guidance in structuring interviews with the WNASP participants and several fieldworkers, as well as key informants from associated institutions that had prior experience with the project.

The WNASP plan supported the formation of cooperatives and women's groups and collaborations with Farmers' Unions. One of the major concerns in this research is to discover how these participatory mechanisms influenced the extent and quality of participation as well as how they were influenced by project strategies. The project supported 18 cooperatives and the establishment of 24 separate informal women's credit groups, one in each scheme. Women's groups were viewed as informal grassroots associations, similar to the educational and religious committees.

The project encouraged the creation of cooperatives to facilitate the financing and marketing of products and to initiate further investments. Only formal Cooperative Associations were registered, on the assumption that these would be responsible for dealing with formal institutions such as local government, banks and private firms. These Cooperatives, together with the Farmers' Unions, were expected to provide services such as supporting schools, health services and maintaining irrigation canals and roads. Each Cooperative consisted of twelve members, of which two were supposed to

be women. Repeated evidence from research participants indicates that the project relied on the Farmers' Union and some local leaders of villages to facilitate the development process, including the process of selecting members of Cooperatives. The project offered those selected training opportunities, which resulted in maintaining the exclusion of marginalized groups and individuals.

Who is Benefiting from the Farmers Organizations?

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, unions were responsible for formation of cooperatives. Nevertheless, the project did not investigate local power relations and the strengths and weaknesses of existing organizations before relying on them to form new associations as well as to facilitate communication with communities. Failure to sufficiently explore this has resulted in funnelling more power into the hands of rural elites and has widened inequalities and marginalization. Relying on local organizations, which were not altogether trusted by locals, to form new organizations raises many questions about the viability of this approach. The answer to these may be derived from the responses of key informants in Chapter Nine, who revealed that development projects are usually concerned with producing fast and quantitative achievements (DO-SSI/Khartoum). In this regard, projects rely on readily available sources of information and existing channels of communication and representation bodies, rather than attempting to reach the inaccessible.

Many research participants believed that members of the Farmers' Unions and other related organizations, such as the Production Councils and farmers' companies, were largely corrupt but were sustained by support from their ethnic groups and the government. The members of the unions used their knowledge and contacts to provide services to their people, including kinship groups, friends and members of their tribe, but as research participants explained, they ensured that they themselves benefitted first. Information concerning the unions' budgets and related items, such as transportation costs, meeting expenses, and members' incentives, were not disclosed. Whom they made contacts with and why, was also unknown (VNS-SSI/ Kosti). This form of organizational representation restricted wider public engagement with formal institutions, blocked the flow of information and created suspicion, tension and distrust. Moreover, there were no records showing the roles, rights, responsibilities and constraints that affected the performance of these Cooperatives.

A significant question is whether those in power were ready to allow others to 'take part', make decisions, set agendas, and manage and control resources (Blackburn and Holland, 1998:6). In fact, those in power may not be prepared to involve others or distribute power, especially in homogeneous communities where factors such as courtesy and loyalty to local people hold great influence. A locality leader (*Umda*) in *Wad-Ashana* 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 organizations; 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).

في هذا المشروع ليس لنا مشاكل كالمشاريع الأخرى، فأنا رئيس اللجنة الشعبية، شيخ القرية، رئيس الجمعية التعاونية، رئيس لجنة التربية والتعليم، عضو المجلس الإنتاجي وعضو اتحاد المزارعين بالولاية. لقد ورثت هذه المناصب وكنت أوفر السكن لكادر المشروع، ووفر لي المشروع فرص للسفر داخل وخارج البلاد

The members of the Cooperatives, despite the fact that some of them were illiterate, were trained and offered several occasions to exchange contemplations on their experiences with similar institutions inside and outside Sudan. For example, thirty-three tenants' leaders visited Syria and Egypt (IFAD, 2002b:10). Exchange visits within the project and with communities outside the project appeared to be a useful practice; however, these opportunities benefited powerful individuals rather than the members of weaker or marginalized groups. The conventional approach to grassroots-level leadership training strengthened the already powerful by providing them with further skills and information. Such training opportunities could be better directed towards other members in order for organizations to exercise control over their leaders and disseminate information about the external system (Fernando, 1995).

Involving Women in the Project

In many villages, women are not involved in grassroots organizations such as educational and religious committees. Therefore, the formation of semi-formal organizations such as Farmers' Unions, Village Popular Committees and Cooperatives intended to guarantee women's representation. The government designed the constitutions of the Popular Committees and the Farmers' Unions, while the project and the State Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Resources and Irrigation prepared those of the Cooperatives. Those who drew up the constitutions were aware that men, especially in rural areas, might not voluntarily allow opportunities for women to participate. Therefore, the constitutions of all semi-formal organizations, such as Village Popular Committees, Farmers' Unions and Cooperatives, stated that women should be represented by at least two members. As explained earlier, in some communities, especially those of homogenous tribal identity, women do not mix with men in public meetings; their selection for the Cooperatives was a mere formality and a matter of conforming to the regulations. Female members of one Cooperative revealed that they heard about their selection, but were neither invited to attend meetings nor informed of the Cooperative's rules and functions. They also confirmed that even if they had been asked to attend they would not have done so, because it would not have been socially acceptable. 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/ Kosti).

تم اختياري عضواً في الجمعية التعاونية ولكني لا أحضر الاجتماعات. أنا أخصائية عمل إجتماعي وأعمل موظفة في المدينة، ولكن عملياً لا أستطيع الإختلاط بالرجال في القرية، فالعمدة ومن معه يفتلون ما يريدون.

The names of at least two women were always recorded in the documents of these organizations, but in reality no woman was involved in decision-making or in the implementation of any organizational activities. This has been attributed to social customs that view the involvement of women and men in the same committees as unacceptable and/or of no value if 'men can do the job' unaided. A village leader in *Wad-Ashana* 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 organizations. 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 *Wad-Ashana*).

لدينا مدارس ابتدائية وثانوية ومعظم النساء متعلّمات وبعضهن خريجات جامعات ويعملن خارج القرية، ولكن رغم ذلك لا يحضرن الاجتماعات العامة ولا يشاركن في المنظمات المحلية. نحن

نكتب أسماءهن إستجابة لطلب السلطات ولا نطلب منهن الحضور
فالرجال يمكنهم القيام بهذه الأعمال

In response to this situation, the project introduced the idea of establishing women's groups in each scheme, and provided these groups with financial and technical support. Apparently the establishment of these groups, as well as the presence of female staff, encouraged women to participate while the project was functioning, but failed to address underlying power relations. On the other hand, this case proves that rules and regulations alone cannot govern people's actions, especially if the latter are linked to cultural norms.

Women's participation in public activities and semi-formal organizations is slightly different in heterogeneous communities where many tribes live together in one scheme. In *Um-Ahani* and similar schemes, where various ethnic groups resided, local organizations were formed by a fractional electoral system. This quota system meant that each tribe was represented according to its size. The existence of heterogeneous groups in this scheme impacted people's interaction with the project. Some women, especially the educated ones, participated in the assemblies and committees as effective and influential members. However, involvement of women in decisions about community affairs, especially in heterogeneous communities, seemed to be only an outcome of internal power competition. Women's involvement became a tool for accessing project resources and maintaining a larger presence in local organizations. In other words, involvement of women in the local organizations supported by the project (Cooperatives, Farmers' Unions) did not indicate that women in heterogeneous communities were in a more empowered position in comparison to homogenous ones.

After the project stopped, women in these communities ceased to participate in local organizations. If these women's groups had been sustained and the women had initiated their own programs, it could be said that real change was achieved in the community and that women were genuinely empowered. However, this did not occur.

In White Nile society, traditional male leaders make decisions on behalf of the community. Moreover, the social traditions remain strong and can hardly be challenged within the community. It is important to understand the origins of prevailing values and traditions, and the justifications for adhering to them. Based on this understanding, strategies can be developed to challenge oppressive and discriminatory practices. Developing the means to address these complicated social issues requires a greater knowledge of community values and beliefs as well as the diplomatic skills to handle these issues.

Sustainability of the Project's Organizations

The achievements and outcomes of these Cooperatives were weak even during the project's existence (UNOPS, 2001) and completely collapsed after the project stopped. UNOPS (2001) indicates that the members of the Cooperatives lacked the necessary confidence and experience to develop self-reliant organizations, due to the fact that farmers' organizations in the White Nile State were for a long time completely dependent on the government to manage their affairs. However, through these new organizations, the project failed to develop an emancipative strategy to provide opportunities to those who had been excluded in the past. The members of the farmers' organizations (who were also members of the Cooperatives) did

not have the capacity and accountability to learn from others' experiences and to transform this knowledge into useful initiatives. As indicated previously, most members were illiterate and guided by personal interests. The failure of these Cooperatives is also attributed to social, tribal, and political influence and interference, as the selection of members was always based on ethnic and political criteria; therefore, the traditional leaders found ways to retain influence through old and new organizations such as Cooperatives and popular committees. Overall, there is general agreement that economic, political and social aspects greatly influence the sustainability of development interventions and initiatives. Nevertheless, we remain trapped in a vicious cycle of endless debate about this idea and little has been done to address it in practice.

Having broadly introduced the local communities and explored the project's approaches, the following section examines the various interventions and their 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 project provided support for the rehabilitation of pumps and civil works. The purpose of rehabilitation was to transform the schemes into working condition through repairs and maintenance, rather than replacement, of existing units. The project design 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 mid-term review of the project recommended that tenants should play some part in rehabilitation, such as by providing of local materials (sand, gravel, and stones) and labor. Upon the project's appraisal, the 'beneficiary contribution' was set at 10% of the scheme's capital costs. Records show that there were no farmer contributions for the first tranche of schemes, and only 1% for the following tranches (UNOPS, 2001:44). The performance of tenants in this area was reported by the supervisory mission as unsatisfactory, as a result of farmers' attitudes and their former long-term dependence (UNOPS, 2001). The United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS) mission criticized the project document for not omitting the participation of 'beneficiaries' in costs as a condition of eligibility for the project's services (UNOPS, 2001:8). This criticism proves that despite the project's interest in participation, its documents failed to explicitly state the objectives behind adopting participation. It also reveals the perception of the supervisory development agency, UNOPS, on what constituted 'participation' and 'participants.' UNOPS clearly perceived the 'project participants' as 'beneficiaries.' Moreover, using participation as a manipulative tool to enforce a specific form of contribution denies the essence of the participation concept.

The project completion report (IFAD, 2002b:8) shows that after the first year, it became clear that farmers across all schemes were neither committed to nor interested in participating in rehabilitation activities. However, research participants revealed that farmers were uncertain of the

potential benefits (LP-FGD, *Wad Ashana*). Furthermore, they indicated that the majority of farmers were poor and were therefore unable to perform unpaid work (interview, MF-SSI). The low level of tenants' participation in the rehabilitation program suggests that if collective participation does not create immediate benefits, it cannot easily take place among poor communities that struggle for survival.

The project report (IFAD, 2002b:7) shows that as a result of the rehabilitation program, hydraulic efficiency increased by more than 60% in comparison to other schemes, which increased by only 45%. This resulted in an increase in the area cultivated from 5,752 *feddan* in the year 1996 to 35,064 *feddan*, which suggests that theoretically, greater benefits should have been gained. These figures, viewed in light of the supervisory mission's report and research participants' views, are questionable, because other factors exist which influenced the utilisation of this land, such as the availability of agricultural inputs to be accessed through the government or financial institutions. This will be examined in the section on the credit component.

The UNOPS (2001:4/42) reports that engineering and design was assessed as poor, and the quality of civil works as sub-optimal; no proper engineering was undertaken prior to the execution of civil works. For example, in some schemes the new pumps remained unused while large areas could not be irrigated because the land was higher than the level of the rehabilitated canal. The report mentions further examples of this component's shortcomings. Of course, the most important view is that of the local people 'targeted' by this project. Neither local organizations nor individuals were involved or consulted when new devices were introduced and the

maintenance of water pumps and bridges were carried out. Local people expressed dissatisfaction and anger about the new changes. During a focus group discussion a farmer in one of the schemes voiced his opinion:

‘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/ Kosti).

قرر مهندسو المشروع إعادة تأهيل الجسور، لم يستمعوا إلى
نصائحنا فساءت حالة الجسور بعد صيانتها وأصبح من الصعب أن
نعبر من خلالها.

The project entered the field with pre-planned solutions and ignored villagers’ opinions about what should be done. The research participants accused the project of using inappropriate techniques to rehabilitate the bridges that connected villages to irrigated land, which made using them more difficult. Apparently, the professionals were unwilling to accommodate local people’s experiences and knowledge.

The Credit Component

The project adopted a new financial strategy through an input supply and credit program designed to finance agricultural and income-generating activities through the Agricultural Bank of Sudan (ABS) and the Farmer Commercial Bank (FCB). The credit component constituted 16.9% of the IFAD loan. The credit strategy was similar to what was adopted later on in the IFAD-North Kordofan Rural Development Project. For the White Nile farmers, this was their first

experience of agricultural finance dealt through a bank, rather than the Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Resources and Irrigation (MAAI). In the past, the financing of agriculture, specifically for cotton, was managed by the MAAI. The project's strategy was designed to introduce competition between ABS and FCB in terms of the quality of services 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 began to prepare a joint lending and repayment policy. It became clear that the two banks were concerned about getting their money back (SIO-SSI/ Kosti). In fact, the loan agreement stipulated that farmer collectives were to repay scheme assets and rehabilitation costs through ABS and FCB; repayment of the loan was expected to be completed within 17 years. UNOPS (2001:6) reports 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 ever be attained; however, they suggest that it would have been realistic to demand a reasonable repayment level such as 20% from the farmers.

When the WNASP was initiated in 1996, different arrangements were implemented through the ABS and FCB. The two financial institutions utilized the group financial intermediation approach. Seasonal crop loans were made available to farmers' cooperatives and unions, which were responsible for the distribution of the funds in the form of loans to farmers and for collecting repayments for onward transmission to the bank. The banks decided not to offer further loans to cooperatives or companies unless 100% repayment had been achieved on previous ones (SIO-SSI). While this system

reduced the transaction costs for the banks, it penalized individuals who repaid in full if other participants of their schemes did not repay.

The group approach was considered by the banks to be necessary for two inter-connected reasons: firstly, the scheme's tenants did not hold individual titles to the land on which they operated, therefore they were unable to provide collateral to qualify for individual loans; secondly, the only collateral that could be offered by poor farmers in the project schemes consisted of collectively owned assets such as pumping equipment. This implied that loans must also be collective. The banks also viewed group lending as a means of significantly reducing 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 bank loans (IFAD, 2002b). The repayment rate was 48% for ABS and 42% for FCB. For women's groups, the accumulated repayment rate was 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 on time, which led to agricultural failure 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' organizations, 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-SSU/ *Kosti*).

البنوك لم توفر القروض في الوقت المناسب ظلت إدارة المشروع وإدارات البنوك ومنظمات المزارعين يلوم بعضهم البعض، وقد استخدم المزارعون تلك القروض لتقضاء إحتياجاتهم وفشلوا في تسديدها نتيجة لفشل الموسم الزراعي.

The banks took serious steps to enforce loan repayment; some farmers were jailed, while others were pursued and threatened by local organizations (the Farmers' Unions and Cooperatives). These actions created a negative image of the project and the banks. UNOPS (2001) attributes the low repayment rates to the banks' inability to offer individual loans, low yields, the inability or unwillingness of farmers to repay loans, late delivery of credit by the banks, and general mistrust between the farmers and banks.

The bank staff pointed out that the Farmers' Unions and the Cooperatives should have presented proposals for funds and requested the approval and disbursement of loans according to their agricultural calendar. Surprisingly, the investment officers employed by the banks to deal with farmers' organizations were agricultural economists, meaning that the bank staff were also aware of the agricultural calendar.

The bank officials held differing views regarding this situation. Interviews with the ABS and FCB officials revealed that none of the schemes achieved 100% repayment for the two seasons of 1996/97 and 1997/98. Therefore, the two banks suspended lending schemes from 1998/99 onwards. The ABS Senior Investment Officer (SIO-SSI/ Kosti) explained that the bank's studies showed that knowledgeable borrowers with well-laid plans succeeded in implementing profitable projects and repaying their loans. However, others had taken the loans as a mere opportunity and did not make any effort towards successful investment. The officers explained that the banks

wanted their money back and that what happened was not their responsibility. The bank staff were referring to projects other than agricultural activities. They indicated that the banks were unaware of farmers' claims and that these were not the concern or responsibility of the ABS or FCB; instead, it should be the duty of local organizations to present proposals for funds and ensure that the approval and submission of loans accorded to their agricultural calendar. The ABS and FCB argument may be correct, as they could not have been asked to do the jobs of professionals and local organizations. However, the investment officers employed by the banks to deal with farmers' organizations were agricultural economists, implying that the banks' staff were also aware of the agricultural calendar.

The experience of the microfinance program indicates that the application of new policies or strategies requires initial studies and trialing, which were apparently not considered by the project. Instead, the new input supply and formal credit program was introduced on a wide scale without prior investigation and baseline studies.

Women had their own particular experiences with the credit component. In the *Um-Ahani* scheme, women were involved in the informal credit programs introduced by the WNASP to support poor families, which were implemented using a group guarantee under the supervision of the ABS. The group participants (FGE-FGD, Kosti) revealed that the first group of twenty-five women applied to buy small carts that was used for transporting water from nearby pumps and agricultural crops from the farms to the villages, a function normally performed by young boys. These women succeeded in repaying back the loans, but 23 of them later sold their carts. Those interviewed explained that the boys had grown up and they now

had no one able to do the work. Another group of 31 poor families borrowed the equivalent of US\$ 70, which they used to buy two goats or sheep, and managed to repay the loan. Twelve largely better-off families, who decided to buy cows that cost US\$ 150-200 each, formed the last groups. The borrowers who bought cows had a negative experience when ten of the cows died, and as a result could not repay their loans according to the scheduled timetable. In general, those who were involved in raising sheep and goats successfully benefitted from the scheme. In interviewing selected borrowers about the benefits gained from the credit program, a female participant in *Um-Ahani* replied that using loans to buy carts or sheep was quite effective but that the loans were minor and made available only once. This female participant (FGE-FGD, Kosti) explained that the ABS decided to punish the whole community by declining all applications because of the failure of some 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 instead used the loans for other projects or to cover household needs. Moreover, the distribution of loans to individual farmers within borrowing cooperatives was not closely monitored by the project to ensure the transparent and equitable selection of farmers for the program (UNOPS, 2001). The Cooperatives and Farmers' Unions supervised the informal credit program. In this process, people submitted the applications to these organizations and waited for approval. The committees then examined and approved the loans and initiated the repayment procedure. It seems that there were no clear criteria specifying who was qualified to receive a loan, and instead other factors influenced

the release and quantity of loans. As an example, during a focus group discussion a female 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/ Kosti).

تؤثر العلاقات الشخصية والقبلية والقرابة على إمكانية الحصول على قرض ومقداره، وليس هناك إعتبار للفقر والحاجة، ومعظم المستفيدين من القروض كانوا من ميسوري الحال، وأنا واحدة منهم. إقترضت مبلغ 35.000 جنيهه لشراء بقرة واكتشفت أنه يجب شراء الحلف ودفع تكلفة التلقيح، وبعد فترة ماتت البقرة، وتكررت التجربة مع عشرة أسر في القرية، وفشل بعضنا في سداد القرض، وتمت معاقبة القرية كلها وأوقف التمويل.

This indicated that personal relations could play a crucial part in shaping the development process and its operational aspects, inputs and outputs. Research participants referred to some well-off people from wealthy and middle class backgrounds who benefited from various interventions before the project's termination, because they had contacts with the project and the banks. Moreover, social and family relations among committee members negatively affected the loan

collection process. These findings support the UNOPS (2001:21) report which states that 'credit to rural communities brought out certain negative impacts such as development of powerful centers within a community and upper level leadership monopolizing credit and marginalizing the poor.' Additionally, the social and family relationships between committee members had a negative effect on loan repayment.

However, the loan or micro-enterprise schemes did not last for more than two seasons; most activities either collapsed or were not considered worth the effort to run.

Extension Services

Due to consideration of the social and developmental implications of the White Nile State, it was found that the participatory approach was most suitable for creating a tenant-financed extension service. However, this objective was not realized (IFAD, 2002b:10). As explained earlier, the project's ideology was fundamentally based on the criterion of 'efficiency' to support the government's economic agenda. This agenda, as explained in the WNASP appraisal report (IFAD, 1996), was devoted to the policy of privatization. To implement this policy, internal and external training was conducted to empower local organizations (Farmers' Unions, Cooperatives and women's groups) to self-sufficiently finance and manage agricultural operations, including the extension services. The completion report (IFAD, 2002b:10/13) illustrates that the extension staff achieved the following outputs: 15 field days, 22 workshops, 109 demonstration plots and the distribution of 4,825 leaflets to 7,387 tenants in the project area. The report also reveals that 210 group discussions and

247 training courses were organized, along with several tenant exchange visits both within Sudan and abroad.

Due to the low literacy rates in some schemes and the absence of women in semi-formal organizations, extension workers had to rely on personal contacts to disseminate the extension's messages and new technologies. In most cases, they conducted separate meetings for men and women. The project staff concentrated on convincing the 'beneficiaries' to merely implement activities, rather than pursue involvement in planning, decision-making and evaluation processes. A female extension worker reported:

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 programs and nutrition classes as a waste of time. We noticed that people were very poor and work hard to survive. (FE-SSI/Kosti).

لقد قضينا وقتاً طويلاً في إقناع الناس بالمشاركة في أنشطة المشروع، والناس فقراء جداً ويعملون بجد لمجابهة متطلبات الحياة، وهم يعتقدون أن أنشطتنا الخاصة بالتوعية ما هي إلا مضيعة للوقت.

To ensure the long-term sustainability of the extension's efforts, the project appraisal report asserted that farmers' organizations would have to assume payment of a portion of local costs, which would increase annually until the project phased out, when the tenants would be expected to bear all local costs (IFAD, 1996). This expectation was based on the assumption that transparent and self-reliant organizations would be developed to their full capacity. In 2002 the WNASP completion report further stated that the objective of creating a

tenant-financed extension service had not been achieved, but that the resources provided by the project would generate a momentum for extension services to continue in the following years (IFAD, 2002b:10). Five years onwards, the research participants indicated that the WNASP's assets, such as cars and office equipment, were distributed to some politicians, government officials and institutions. A former female development officer explained:

'I worked for the project as a development officer. The project paid our salaries, provided cars, fuel, extension material and some equipment for the community development centers. After the project stopped all the project's 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 up what had been started' (FDO-SSI).

عملت مع المشروع في وظيفة ضابط تنمية، وقام المشروع بدفع رواتبنا وتوفير السيارات والوقود والمعدات لمراكز التنمية، وبعد توقف المشروع تم توزيع السيارات والمعدات على المؤسسات الحكومية والسياسيين والقيادات المحلية، وتبقت سيارة واحدة للإرشاد الزراعي، ولكن ليس هناك وقود ولا تتمكن من مواصلة أو متابعة ما بدأناه

The White Nile project, despite its documented outputs, achieved neither efficiency while in operation, nor the expected sustainability. The project designers did not consider limitations and risks; they therefore failed to identify alternative procedures for protecting and utilizing the project's assets and resources in an efficient way.

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

Community Forestry

The WNASP also supported a community forestry program. The Forests National Corporation (FNC) in the White Nile State provided seedlings from their central nursery and deployed one of their extension specialists to work for the project, which paid her a monthly allowance. The project's Village Extension staff, as part of the community development component, contributed to implementing activities such as the construction and dissemination of improved fuel wood stoves, the establishment of nurseries in villages and schools and the conduction of awareness programs.

The project completion report (2002b: 12-13) records a significant number of achievements. These included extension events, woodlots, windbreaks, and school and community nurseries. These achievements are reproduced in table 6.2. However, the performance of the community forestry program was evaluated by UNOPS (2001:6-7) as weak; only 21-23% of the planned activities were implemented. The poor results were attributed to indifferent interest from farmers, water shortages, the selection of unsuitable species such as eucalyptus, and the high costs of planting and the difficulties of protecting the new plantation.

The FNC confirmed that there were several scattered trees and limited windbreaks. Apparently, there was a lack of coordination between the agencies involved. A village nursery supervisor and a village extension officer recounted their experience with village and school nurseries:

'The project established the village nursery. It provided all the material and paid for laborers. I used to look after 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 if I needed some materials for the nursery. But who is going to pay the cost of transport? (VNS-SSI/ Um-Ahani).

قام المشروع بإنشاء المشاتل القروية ووفر المعدات والبذور. كنت أعمل مشرفاً على أحد تلك المشاتل ويدفع لي حافز، وأقوم بتوزيع تلك الشتول مجاناً على المواطنين. بعد توقف المشروع توقف الحافز وطلب مني الذهاب إلى وزارة الزراعة للحصول على المعدات والبذور، لم أفعل، وذلك لتوقف الحافز وعدم وجود من يدفع تكاليف السفر.

'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. We hoped if people paid for it. Unfortunately, the project management refused our suggestions' (FFEO-SSI/ Kosti).

كنا نخشى النتائج السلبية لتوزيع الشتول مجاناً ورفعنا ملاحظتنا للمشروع ولكن لم يؤخذ بها، فالشتول مجانية والناس لا يهتمون بها، وكنا نأمل أن يوضع لها سعر رمزي.

Table 6.2: Community Forestry

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

Source: Produced from UNOPS (2001:34) and IFAD (2002)

Regarding the project's achievements in the community forestry program documented in the project's completion report, the management staff of the Forests National Corporation (FNC) in the White Nile State indicated that they were neither involved in nor informed of these activities. They affirmed that the FNC had no knowledge of the nurseries and shelterbelts recorded in the project's final report, except for the *El-Kunuz* nursery that was left under their supervision and still in operation.

The project adopted a distinct approach and did not attempt to acquire or apply the previous experiences of others with community forestry, or coordinate with those who wished to encourage communal efforts. A senior manager at FNC illustrated that

'The FNC had announced a policy that supports community initiatives for establishing tree nurseries. We provide some of the needs and encourage community organizations to sell the seedlings at reasonable prices' (SM-SSI/ Kosti).

أعلنت الهيئة القومية للغابات مبادراتها لدعم أنشطة المجتمع وخاصة إنشاء المشاتل، فنحن نوفر بعض الإحتياجات ونشجع بيع الشتول للمواطنين

Overall, 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, Kosti), operation of the school and village nurseries had completely collapsed by the time of my arrival, excepting one which was handed over to the Forests National Corporation before the project's termination. However, it must be said that the only remnants of the project in the *Um-Ahani* and *Wad-Ashana*

schemes were some elements of the community forestry program, in the form of windbreaks, community-forested land and some trees distributed to households.

Community Development

The community development component focused on involving women in the project activities. The project adopted the 'women in development' approach that emphasized women's traditional reproductive role (Brohman, 1996:283/84). It also provided women with loans through the ABS and the FCB. These loans aimed to generate income through productive activities such as dairy and poultry farming, transporting goods on carts, goat rearing and food processing. The component supported this by including nutrition, food processing and literacy classes. The project used women's groups and two women agents in each scheme as voluntary facilitators.

The female agents received more training to work as facilitators and maintain the sustainability of the program. The project targeted women within the age range of 15 to 45 years old. Its records showed that 44 training centers for women were established (IFAD, 2002b: 22), and that various training and lending activities were implemented. These activities are specified in Table 6.3. Hundreds of women participated in these activities. Regarding the total number of trainees, the number of participants exceeds the actual number that attended as some women attended more than one training session. The project provided the centers with trainers, ingredients, and food processing and kitchen equipment to conduct the women's training program. The research participants indicated that they had enjoyed and benefited from the new information and social interaction provided in these programs. They also revealed that

after the project's termination all equipment was distributed among the members of local organizations. 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 program were taken by some people and sold in the market. We could not report the cases because those people are our relatives, (FP-FGD/ Um-Ahani).

قام بعض الأفراد بالإستيلاء على معدات بعض مراكز التنمية
وعلى بعض المضخات وبيعها في السوق، ولا أحد يستطيع أن يبلغ
عنهم لأنهم من قبيلة واحدة أو أسرة واحدة .

The community development program was conducted in community centers established for the purpose of accommodating the planned activities. In *Wad-Ashana* an old government building was used as the women's centre, while in *Um-Ahani* a donated house was used for this purpose. However, at the time of my fieldwork the women's centers were no longer in operation. This collapse can be attributed to the lack of financial and technical support.

Table 6.3: Women's Program

Activity	Number attended
Training sessions	
Literacy	1,057
Handicrafts	1,396
Nutrition and food processing	1,666
Tailoring and sewing	966
Credit program	
	Number/ value
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).

It appears that woman's groups and their female agents were not sufficiently empowered to sustain the project activities. Nevertheless, the formation of women's groups generated greater empowerment of women in the household; through their involvement in micro-credit activities, they gained knowledge which contributed to the improvement of household functioning. Women were not directly involved in facilitating the credit procedures, as male-dominated organizations were responsible for dealing with the banks. Thus, this limited form of participation did not challenge the gender division of labor in the society. Women's perceptions

and choices, especially in homogeneous communities, were not publicly voiced and their formal participation in community affairs was non-existent.

The WNASP operated in a similar way to most conventional development projects in that it was planned and evaluated by outsiders, and involved the beneficiaries only during the implementation stage. Dhamotharan (1995) explains that this top-down approach has several disadvantages: 1) the project design may not coincide with communities' needs and priorities, especially with those of underprivileged groups such as the women and poor; 2) local people are seen as merely implementation tools; 3) local people do not develop a sense of responsibility for the project, as they do not develop any linkages or technical capabilities that can sustain their participation. Research participants confirmed these arguments. A planning officer at the Ministry of Finance and Labor Force who worked as a consultant for the WNASP accused the project design of being top-down and of not consulting those whom it 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, Kosti). During a focus group discussion one male farmer elaborated on people's expectations of 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/ Um-Ahani).

خلال فترة المشروع كان لدينا أحلام كبيرة وكنا نتوقع أن نحصل على الخدمات الصحية والتعليمية والتمويل لإنشاء مؤسسات إنتاجية كمعاصر الزيوت وإعداد الأغذية ولكن لم يحدث ذلك لأن المشروع إختار أن يعمل مع بعض الأفراد وترك لهم ممتلكاته

The UNOPS (2001) report, which was prepared immediately after the project's completion, criticized the project reports for highlighting achievements while ignoring problems, failures and impact assessments. The UNOPS (2001:11) suggested that WNASP records should have included an impact assessment and an assessment of the prospects for sustainability. If accountable representatives encourage communities to participate in designing, monitoring and evaluating projects, their participation can achieve the intended objectives of efficiency, effectiveness, empowerment and sustainability.

The WNASP performance and outputs were monitored and assessed by the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS) and national government representatives. In fact, government representatives were largely involved only during field visits, leaving the preparation of reports to development agencies. However, local communities and 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-SS; SIO-SSI). Theoretically, the project had some non-material goals entailing empowerment. The project's efforts towards achieving this goal were not addressed in the project's completion report, which indicates that the conventional evaluation procedure was ultimately dependent on qualitative measures. As has been explained in Chapters Three and Four, local people's views can

be reflected through participatory monitoring and evaluation, which can be implemented through a process approach (Mosse, 1998). When adopting participatory approaches, the monitoring and evaluation stages should be shared by all actors, considering that people are able to evaluate their own inputs and achievements from their own perspectives (Schneider and Libercier, 1995b).

At the time of this study, the local communities and the State Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Resources and Irrigation (MAAI) were discussing the challenges facing poor farmers as a result of the government's decision to withdraw its involvement in productive enterprises. The same situation was adopted large-scale in 1996 by the WNASP to support the government's privatization policy. Despite the failure of the WNASP credit program, the government's current strategy is to relieve the Federal and State Government from any financial responsibilities. They intend to force local communities to deal directly with local financial institutions in financing agricultural operations. The next section examines the impact of this decision in light of the WNASP's experiences.

New Government Policy

The project assigned responsibility for the credit component to the Agricultural Bank of Sudan and the Farmer Commercial Bank in 1996/97 to facilitate privatization and replace the old system previously managed by the MAAI in the White Nile State. The farmers organized themselves into new cooperatives in addition to their existing organizations such as the Farmers' Unions and Productive Councils. As explained earlier, the new system failed; therefore, in 1998 the State Government and the MAAI established the Agricultural

Support Fund (ASF), locally termed *Sandug*, to finance agricultural operations. The UNOPS report (2001) criticizes the formation of the ASF and accuses it of relaying a message contrary to that identified as the project's objective, specifically the adoption of privatization and self-reliance strategies. The ASF began to finance farmers and provide tools for maintaining the irrigation schemes and agricultural extension services. The ASF experienced some difficulties with farmers' organizations. An ASF officer (SAO-SSI, 10/2005) explained that local leaders (members of semi-formal organizations) created many problems and criticized the ASF for not allocating more funds to their organizations. The ASF officer attested that the local leaders used the money to cover members' expenses, in the form of incentives and paying their transportation and accommodation costs. The same ASF officer also revealed that ordinary farmers had no knowledge of these issues and were never informed of them by their representatives. The existence of these incentives sparked competition and conflict between local organizations' membership, and explains why particular members held several positions and remained influential members of executive committees for a lengthy duration.

In 2004 the Federal Government decided to complete privatize the White Nile irrigation schemes (the previous WNASP sites) and subsequently terminated the Agricultural Support Fund (ASF), because the cultivation season of 2004/05 was to mark the assumption by farmers' organizations of full responsibility for their agricultural and community development activities.

At the time of undertaking fieldwork, the Agricultural Bank of Sudan (ABS), based on previous experiences of the

WNASP in the mid-1990s, had refused to finance the farmers out of the banks' resources. Therefore, the Federal Ministry of Finance and National Planning undertook to finance farmers in the White Nile State for one season through the ABS. An ASF officer (SAO-SSI, Kosti) explained that the government's philosophy was based on the premise that agriculture is the individual responsibility of farmers, who must manage all financial and 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 expressed their concern about this decision and raised several objections. Firstly, the farmers' organizations lacked the necessary management and administrative skills and experience. In addition, the organizations were plagued by internal conflicts, corruption and a lack of transparency. Secondly, the strategic thinking of the national banks was basically reduced to investment, which may not provide sufficient support for farmers. Evidence illustrates that the farmers lacked confidence in their previous experience with ABS lending procedures. This raised the worry that the failed experience of financing in the project might be repeated. Thirdly, the exclusion of the State Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Resources and Irrigation (MAAI) from the process would deprive the farmers of the limited services provided through the ASF, such as extension services, timely provision of inputs, and close supervision of implementation. Finally, and most importantly, despite its continual claims regarding decentralization and the participation of local communities in decisions affecting their lives, the central government continues to make decisions on behalf of the state authorities and local communities.

Having described the project interventions that adopted the philosophy of participation, the following section examines the factors that influenced the project's ability to achieve its planned objectives.

Influencing Factors for the WNASP's Outcomes

Many factors affected the trajectory of the WNASP. Some of these are related to the project's internal structures while others pertain to community and government institutions. Exploring these constraints can provide insight into the difficulties faced by local communities when dealing and interacting with external development interventions. It can also suggest answers to the research question which regards the factors that have influenced people's participation in development projects.

Project-related Factors

While the project appraisal report encouraged participatory communication, in practice the policies of the project's partners' (the ABS and the FCB) and the dominance of traditional leaders have negatively influenced the development process. There is a general need for a more efficient flow of information between projects, communities and related local institutions. Implementing this requires transparent networks between different development providers, a condition that did not exist between the WNASP partners. The WNASP adopted a simplistic communication channel in choosing to approach communities through local leaders who may not have been fully trusted by local communities. This approach concealed many realities and further excluded much of the powerless and marginalised.

The project's staff were concerned with producing tangible achievements. In hoping to save time and to ensure widespread acceptance, the fieldworkers and project management aligned themselves with selected individuals and social groups within the community. This restricted the participation of the marginalized and poor and ended up empowering those who were already powerful.

It also appears that the national banks, as partners of the project, did not define mechanisms to communicate with poor or illiterate customers. This was a shortcoming of the WNASP's credit strategy that relied completely on the conditions of service of the Agricultural Bank of Sudan (ABS) and the Farmer Commercial Bank (FCB). Neither ABS nor FCB differentiated between funding agricultural activities and other investment projects. Farming activities were typically run according to a rigid timetable application system, which farmers and agricultural extension workers were familiar with. Any delay in carrying out the planned farming operations or failure to make the inputs (capital, seeds and fertilizers) available on time could create a disaster, which is what happened during the first two years of the WNASP. This was a strong, valid argument made by both specialists at the MAAI and local participants, who expressed their concerns about the suitability of the banks as lenders if they did not consult the farmers and professionals.

Government-related Factors

Research participants perceived the lack of responsiveness of government officials and poor extension services as crucial constraints to development processes in their area. The World Development Report points out that the poor

all over the world generally view government institutions as unaccountable, distant and corrupt (World Bank, 2001b). However, the 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 NGOs to plan and carry them out on behalf of the government’ (FDO-SSI).

جميع الخدمات الإرشادية ليس لها مخصصات من الدولة وليس لها قيمة، فخدمات الإرشاد الزراعي الغابي والبيطري دائماً تترك للمنظمات لتقوم بها نيابة عن الدولة .

Another research participant described how, during the project’s duration, there were some officials at least 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/Um-Ahani).

المؤسسات الحكومية لا علاقة لها بالمواطنين ولا تقدم لهم خدمات، كنا نراهم خلال فترة المشروع ولكن الآن لا نراهم

The government is able to interfere in some aspects of the process such as the election of community representatives. Some participants considered that the government was mainly focused on allaying the concerns of elites and powerful leaders, as through them the government can control the poor and

powerless majority. One senior government official, who asked me to turn off the tape recorder during the interview but made sure that I wrote down his statement in his own words, revealed that:

‘The Ministry of Agriculture 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/ Kosti).

تشرف وزارة الزراعة بالنيل الأبيض مع بعض المؤسسات الأخرى على إنتخابات إتحادات المزارعين. في العام الماضي تلقينا تعليمات من أحد القيادات السياسية في العاصمة بأنهم يريدون شخصاً بعينه (أحد القيادات المحلية) منتخبا ضمن القائمة .

The formation of local organizations in the White Nile State was governed by the prevailing socio-political environment, while their contribution was constrained by socio-economic factors. Despite the belief that a free and democratic process should be the key factor in the selection of community representatives, under circumstances of high levels of illiteracy, ignorance and a sense of inferiority, even free elections may not produce genuine representatives. People may unconsciously accept or select the very people who deprive them of their rights and contribute to their misery.

The selection of higher-level officials for certain positions was based on their tribal status and influence. The present government has intensively adopted this policy in order to avoid any conflict and to gain the support of influential individuals or groups. Government officials have little interest

in challenging this situation in which community representatives are always the traditional leaders of the largest tribes. As a senior officer of the State Government revealed,

‘This situation was legitimized 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/ Kosti).

قننت الحكومية المركزية عبر سياساتها، قننت لتمكين القيادات المحلية، حتى أصبح الوضع خارج نطاق السيطرة، فالقيادات المحلية تحدد من تريد من الوزراء ومن لا ترغب في التعاون معه، فالوزراء يقلقون على أوضاعهم ويحاولون إرضاء تلك القيادات.

Representation and power relations in the White Nile State are governed by socio-political factors. These reveal the importance of social norms and government intervention in determining the nature and composition of community organizations. It also appeared that the allocation of resources and public services were significantly influenced by government policies.

Community-related Factors

In White Nile society, the powerless have long been dominated by the powerful and have been reduced to the mentality of dependence. This restricts their capability to act and make their own decisions, while those who do enjoy power and status oppose challenges to this situation (Freire, 1970). The project did not address these dominant power relations within the community. Those with little power, such as women and minority groups, were usually excluded from decision-making processes and had limited opportunities to express their

views, needs, and priorities. For example, due to unchallenged traditions, corruption and a lack of resources, the women's groups of the *Um-Ahani* and *Wad-Ashana* schemes were dissolved and the community development centers closed after the project's withdrawal.

Even if a member of a minority group is elected or selected for membership in a semi-formal organization (Farmers' Unions, Productive Councils and Cooperatives), the strongest community groups may 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/Kosti).

واجهت صندوق الدعم الزراعي كثير من المشاكل، خاصة التمويل واسترداد الديون، وذلك نتيجة للصراعات القبلية وتركيبية

وسلوك القيادات المحلية وعدم قدرة السكان على مواجهة قياداتهم. كانت لدينا تجربة مع رئيس أحد مجالس الإنتاج عندما فشل في تسديد القرض فقررنا حبسه وتوقعنا أن يقوموا بحل المشكلة ولكنهم رفضوا مساعدته، ونما إلى علمنا أنه من قبيلة صغيرة من تسع قبائل ممثلة في المجلس .

The diversity of interests and interest groups in a small area like the White Nile may lead to a lack of accountability and solidarity. If this issue is not carefully addressed, selected or elected representatives may succumb to human nature and personal interest and become less responsive and accountable to interest groups of which they are not a part (Barrett, 1995:100). Moreover, limited or a lack of education and certain government policies have deprived local people of the ability to be assertive and resist traditional leadership. 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/ Um-Ahani).

يقوم القادة المحليون بإرسال أبنائهم للدراسة في العاصمة أو خارج السودان ولا يبذلون جهداً لتحسين أوضاع المدارس الأولية بمناطقهم .

The research participants identified corruption and the mismanagement of public resources by urban elites and tribal leaders as a constraint to development efforts. A research participant from the *Wad-Ashana* scheme revealed that these leaders allegedly misused public assets. He explained the reaction of ordinary people to acts of corruption:

'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 it would be a big shame for our tribe in the region' (MP-SSI/ Um-Ahani).

قام أحد أعضاء إتحاد المزارعين ببيع المعدات الخاصة
بمركز تنمية المجتمع، ولم يبلغ عنه لأن ذلك سيكون عاراً على قبيلتنا
في المنطقة .

A senior agriculturist attested to this recurring 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/ Kosti).

خلال حوار مع أعضاء واحد من إتحادات المزارعين صدمت
عندما ذكروا أن ممتلكات الدولة هي ممتلكات عامة ولا يحرم أخذها
والإستفادة منها، حينها قررنا التعامل مع هذا الأمر بجدية أكثر .

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/ Kosti).

أوضح أحد المدراء الزراعيين كيف تعامل الكادر الإرشادي بالمنطقة مع هذه المفاهيم، وذكر أنهم قرروا الحصول على مساعدة من علماء الدين، وذلك بأن يرافقوا الكادر الإرشادي وتقديم التوجيهات والفتاوى بخصوص حرمة الممتلكات العامة، وكذلك توضيح ضرورة المحافظة عليها وتسديد القروض المتحصلة من الحكومة والبنوك. وقد اعترف بعض القادة المحليين بأنهم كانوا يجهلون تلك الأمور.

In fact, the people in these areas had a sensitive attitude towards loans. According to their values and traditions, the default or delay of loan repayments is not acceptable. These traditional values were not adhered to when people were asked to repay the bank loans, which were instead perceived as government or external agency grants which did not require payment. It seemed that people's previous experience with external development assistance shaped their general ideas and expectations of it. As a result of these experiences, people developed double standards when responding to 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 some time ago when international

during the drought disaster when they depended on others to help them' (SIO-SSI/ EI-Dweem).

يعتقد بعض الناس أنه ليس هناك ضرورة لتسديد القروض الحكومية خاصة تلك التي ترتبط بالمشاريع. إنهم يظنون أن المشاريع عليها أن تدفع كل شيء، وقد تعلموا ذلك خلال فترة الجفاف التي جعلتهم يعتمدون على الغير

Illiteracy and lack of awareness also reduced people's capacity to participate in the project. Such limiting factors deprive people of self-confidence and the ability to organize themselves, seek out resources and overcome a sense of inferiority. It also reinforces the unconscious sense of loyalty to local leaders who may not be fully committed to the community's wellbeing.

To overcome these shortcomings people must be conscious of their rights and responsibilities. They must also be empowered in order to challenge oppressive and corrupt situations. People need to attain self-confidence, self-assertiveness, morals, courage and group solidarity; develop systems of collective and democratic decision-making; and conceive of higher aspirations for themselves and their communities.

Summary

This chapter presented the experiences of the White Nile Agricultural Services Project. It explored the project's approaches, activities and outcomes. The interactions between stakeholders, as well as the factors that influenced participation, have been the focus of this case study.

On the project sites I discovered that the project's performance was influenced by factors such as the existence of

various ethnic groups and distrusted leaders, which created divisions and conflicts among the community. Moreover, the project relied on rural elites and powerful members of semi-formal organizations to facilitate the establishment of new organizations and manage the flow of resources to the community. This negatively impacted the extent and quality of community participation.

Many people initially participated in the project with high expectations. However, the following factors influenced the level of participation: personal interests; a lack of networks between development actors, particularly between the primary stakeholders and government agencies; the failure to address power relations; and the unsuccessful efforts of financial institutions to develop innovative mechanisms for dealing with poor and illiterate customers. Furthermore, people's previous experiences with international relief organizations shaped their perception of external development providers, hence influencing the nature of their interaction with the project.

Due to cultural values and practices, women in some communities were particularly disadvantaged, as men did not generally accept their right to participation in local organizations and public activities. In some schemes, traditions constrained women's involvement in influential community organizations. However, the hiring of female staff encouraged the local communities to female participation in project activities via the channel of women's groups.

The findings of this case study raise concerns regarding the issue of indigenous knowledge and consultation, especially when we consider the attitudes and behavior of the project engineers who rejected villagers' opinions and advice on the new technical devices introduced. This created suspicion of and

doubt in the technical capabilities of the staff, especially after the failure of these new devices.

The case study reveals the many challenges that continue to face participatory development efforts in the White Nile State. Firstly, there needs to be concern regarding the relationships between government agencies and ordinary people. Secondly projects and local government should focus on providing support to the grassroots organizations which represent the diverse communities. Finally, there is a need to encourage the establishment of effective networks and links between community organizations, national and international organizations, financial institutions and government authorities.

The WNASP provides valuable lessons for IFAD and other development agencies. However, before adopting or rejecting any of the project's techniques, an in-depth analysis of the socio-economic and environmental conditions in particular settings should be conducted. IFAD's central unit in Sudan explains that because of the limited success of the White Nile project, amended approaches were introduced in the North Kordofan Rural Development Project (NKRDP). The following two chapters will analyze the experiences of that project and surmise how these new participatory mechanisms operated.

North Kordofan Rural Development Project: Indigenous Organizations and Practices

Introduction

Chapter Six demonstrated that local organizations and power relations are key factors influencing the successful implementation of participatory development programs. Thus, there is a need to understand the social norms, and nature and capacity of local organizations in the area of the project's implementation. The project that is the primary case study of this research, the North Kordofan Rural Development Project (NKRDP), was once again implemented by the same development agencies: IFAD and the Government of Sudan.

The objective of this case study is to understand the nature of interactions between local communities and development providers and identify the factors that promoted or constrained people's involvement. This also contributes to the identification of possible ways to enhance the outcomes of participatory development projects in Sudan. The report on the case study will cover Chapters Seven and Eight. Chapter Seven introduces the North Kordofan Rural Development Project and examines its organizational structure and staffing system. It also explores the socio-cultural and economic context of the project sites. To gain a deeper understanding of the nature and potential of NKRDP interventions, Chapter Eight will examine in detail the approaches employed by the NKRDP. In this and the following chapter I will use the term 'the project' to refer

specifically to the North Kordofan Rural Development Project, which represents the major case study of this research. The project was under the direct supervision of IFAD but the various stages were the result of collaboration with the State Government of North Kordofan.

The Project Context

The impetus for the North Kordofan project emerged from the consequences of recurring droughts in North Kordofan State (NKS) during the period from 1984 to 1990. The Government of Sudan issued a request to IFAD to fund 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 was formally agreed upon and signed by the Government of the Sudan and IFAD, and the loan approval was finalized in 2000. The project was implemented in 2001 and terminated in 2008. The total cost of the project was US\$ 23.7; US\$ 10.5 was from the IFAD loan, and US\$ 9.1 was contributed by the Islamic Development Bank specifically for the construction of the El-Obeid–Bara road which links the NKS capital with the city of Bara. On IFAD's part, it was assumed that the project's 'beneficiaries' would contribute 8.2% of the funds. Their contribution was calculated on the basis of labor, land and money through the local revolving fund. The project worked in two localities (UmRuwaba and Bara) and targeted 139,000 households (Table 7.1.). IFAD Reports (2004:4) show that only 17,600 households were directly involved, while the remainder passively benefitted from the provided services.

The overall goal of the project was to improve the living standards of participants, consolidate their food security, and enhance resilience to drought and other natural disasters (IFAD, 1999:1). Specific objectives included increasing the capacity of village committees to plan, execute and manage development projects; establishing support systems to assist communities by promoting communal management of natural resources; and creating sustainable participatory financial institutions.

In light of these objectives, the project operated on the basis of the following components:

- Community development, which includes mobilization, awareness and training;
- Utilization and development of natural resources;
- Rural finance and credit, and establishment of a revolving fund mechanism; and
- Institutional capacity building at different levels (community and related government institutions).

The relationship between the project and the local government authorities was based on the concerns and interests of both parties. Thus, the project's planning system was shaped by the local government's objective of generating benefits. Al-Hardallu (2002:131) asserts that local governments in Sudan have come under criticism because of their poor performance and limited accomplishments. The state government's concern is to initiate a project that can deliver services which positively impact livelihoods (KD-SSI, El-Obeid). Accordingly, projects provide an opportunity for the government of North Kordofan State to undertake effort towards some form of development. This understanding 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 local government authorities to finalize certain issues, which facilitated the subsequent hiring of a large number of fieldworkers and the approval of a new constitution governing community development organizations (established by the project).

Table 7.1: The Project Sites & Targeted Communities

Locality	Total Population	No. of Households	%
UmRuwaba	541,000	91,740	66
Bara	279,000	47,260	34
Total	820,000	139,000	100
Rural population is 84%.			
Total project area is 40,000 sq. km.			
Number of villages targeted by the project 320			
Number of villages reached by the project 168			
Number of households in the project villages 100-500.			

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

The Organizational Structure

The project involved numerous actors: the implementing agency, local participants, the state government and commercial banks. It also revolved around the main

operational themes of training, material supply and technical support. The project duplicated its staff, particularly at the state and locality levels. In El-Obeid (the state capital) the Project General Manager and four other technical managers were responsible for dealing with monitoring and evaluation, gender and development, training, and administration and finance. In addition, secretarial and other support staff were present. This set-up was repeated at the locality level in both UmRuwaba and Bara. Under the supervision of each locality there were a number of technical units, each engaged directly with local communities. The technical units were central to the project's organizational structure, as they provided a direct link to communities at village level. Each unit was headed by one planning and development officer and included a number of assistants who dealt with the areas of gender and development, natural resources, rural credit and the *Sandug*. The project used the local term '*Sandug*' to refer to the village revolving fund. This fund was provided by the project, as informal credit.

Staff Unity and Interaction

The project staff were 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 organizations and attended several training courses and workshops outside Sudan. They were employed and paid by IFAD, and stationed either in El-Obeid or in Bara and UmRuwaba. At the state and locality levels all the staff have computers, and the offices were equipped with all the required facilities such as, Internet, fax photocopying machines and number of cars. On the other hand, the junior staff were mainly new graduates and work as fieldworkers at the technical units. They were responsible for

implementation, monitoring and follow-up of all the project interventions at village level. The project paid them a daily topping, SDD 1,200, when working in the villages.

Each technical unit was responsible of 25-30 villages. The unit's staff should visit each village at least once a month. This put a burden on the field staff who worked six days a week and spent five days in the villages. The working day starts from 8 am until 8 pm. The technical units have only one car, no computer or communication facilities, and no supporting staff. This means that in addition to their technical responsibilities they should carry out the financial and administration work. The staff spent more hours during the night either in the office or at home writing reports. They used carbon paper to make copies and send the original to the locality or the state offices.

I was able to observe the daily schedule of the staff and to record their interaction with members of village committees and villages. The management and technical staff, who were stationed at the state and locality headquarters, did not play a significant field-level role. The field staff expressed their frustration at the lack of training, limited resources and poor incentives for productive work. During a focus group discussion, a female member of the key technical unit at field level in UmRuwaba related her experience with the project:

'We work under very hard conditions. We do the work and the senior staff come to enjoy and observe. They only come for visits or to accompany IFAD and UN missions and get paid SDD 2,000 a day while we get only SDD 1,200. We do not have financial authority. If there is something urgent we have to cancel our fieldtrip and send someone to El-Obeid, using the only available car, to get permission

and approval. They always give us a very hard time. Our routine visits and that distract us from our program. The good thing about the project was that it helped us to get government jobs. Everyone here is planning to return 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/UmRuwaba).

نحن موظفو الحقل بالمشروع نعمل في ظروف صعبة، بينما يقوم كبار الموظفين بالزيارات الميدانية ويتقاضون مقابل ذلك 2000 جنيه في اليوم ونحن نتقاضى 1200 في اليوم، وليست لدينا سيطرة مالية فالإجراءات المالية يتم التصديق عليها في مدينة الأبيض، ونحن نرسل السيارة الوحيدة التي لدينا مع أحد الموظفين لتكملة الإجراءات، ونتعرض للضغوط بسبب سلوكهم في العمل، فمطالبهم لا تنتهي، كبارسال التقارير ومرافقة الزوار، وأفضل ما في المشروع أنهم ساعدونا في الحصول على وظيفة، والآن نفكر في الرجوع للعمل مع مؤسسات الدولة فهناك فرص أفضل للتدريب.

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) travelled 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/ Bara).

أضافت مرشدة أخرى قائلة: نحن نقوم بكل شئى وهو يحصلون على كل شئى، وكبار الموظفين يسافرون هنا وهناك لحضور

الدورات التدريبية ولديهم أجهزة الفاكس والكمبيوتر والسيارات ونحن لدينا سيارة واحدة تطوف بها لمرافعة أنشطة ثلاثين قرية.

It was observed that the fieldworkers were frustrated and felt a sense of exploitation by the project. Most had two to three years working experience and joined the project as trainees or volunteers. The project had initially promised to assist them in obtaining permanent government jobs. In its last three years, the project management worked with the state government to create jobs and allocate a proportion of the budget for employing these fieldworkers, and in 2004 the state government began to employ them and pay their salaries (IFAD, 2004:5). Apparently, the risk of losing their employment was absent after that. Despite this, the fieldworkers started to express their dissatisfaction and frustration. They revealed that there was no procedure through which they could openly express their concerns. They were incapable of freely addressing weighty issues, as this would involve criticism of the senior staff or project assistance. Some expressed the hope that one day they would attain senior jobs with other IFAD projects, therefore to confront the situation might incur negative consequences for their future career. However, many of them could choose to withdraw without confrontation instead. This could be risky for the NKRDP if the trained field staff decided to move on because of the workload, poor incentives and stressful working environment.

There is also a contrast in the attitudes of the two groups of staff; for example, the senior staff perceived participation as a tool for ensuring the successful implementation of activities. The senior staff conveyed the positive side of the project in order to impress outsiders. They used encouraging and reinforcing methods to ensure

participation remained within the strategic framework of the project. In this regard, they were very concerned about producing tangible achievements. In contrast, the field staff who originated from the area within the project's scope and were government employees, viewed participation as a means by which local communities can be equipped with suitable training and resources to carry out development in their areas. They believed that the project should coordinate with any local NGOs prepared to offer assistance. These unique conceptions emerged as a result of their daily contact with local communities and other development providers. The field staff had extensive awareness of people's ideas and opinions of 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/ Bara).

إن نتائج جهودنا وهذه الزيارات الكثيفة قليلة جداً لأن الموارد المتاحة للتنمية ضعيفة وأحياناً نذهب إلى قرية ونحس انهم غير راغبين في مقابلتنا.

Apparently the field staff did not share the sense of belonging to one united organization with the senior staff, and were not unafraid of freely addressing the development agency and the project management about issues important to themselves or the community.

The following section describes the NKRDP sites and permits insight into existing local participatory organizations

and practices. This will facilitate the later exploration of the potential of the Village Development Organizations (VDOs) established by the project, and their ability to mobilize resources and encourage participation. It will also enable us to understand people's perspectives and visions regarding the project's interventions and participatory approaches.

North Kordofan Setting

The climate of North Kordofan State (NKS) is typical of that in the Sahelian zone, which is characterized by low rainfall (350 mm/year) that varies enormously over area and time. It suffers from an increasing frequency and severity of drought, such as that which occurred from 1970 to 2004 and resulted in one of the most apparent famines in recent Sudanese history during 1984/85. The state's vulnerable situation has previously encouraged many relief organizations to offer assistance free of charge. These same relief organizations were later blamed for creating a negative image of external assistance and development agencies, because they treated people as merely beneficiaries and recipients rather than as participants or partners (SMN-SSI, NKRDP).

North Kordofan State is blessed with much natural potential for capital; land, water and biological resources, such as trees and pastoral land, are abundant in the state, but these resources are put at great risk by desert encroachment and drought (Egeimi, 2001:6). North Kordofan state has reasonable financial capital in terms of livestock and forest resources, especially acacia gum, but it lacks access to credit and physical infrastructure such as roads and electricity. The state is also rich in social capital; there are numerous grassroots organizations, a university and research institutions of high

reputation, academic and regional organizations, and large numbers of professionals who work in the capital or abroad who remain committed to their home people.

The inhabitants of North Kordofan are of mixed heritage: Arab, Egyptian, Turkish, Levantine and Negro, yet the common language remains Arabic, which is spoken by all. The dominant tribes are the *Gawama*, who own most of the gum-producing farms, and the *Dar Ḥamid* and *Bederia* who live around El Obeid (the capital of North Kordofan state). Within these settled tribes, people classify themselves into smaller groups. The region is also occupied by nomad groups such as the *Baggara* and *Kabbabish*. *Baggara* is a collective term applied to all cattle-herding tribes; such tribes occupy a wide area, from Kordofan and Mid-Western Sudan to Darfur in the Sudan's far West and extending to neighboring Chad. They are a collection of seven major tribes: *Hawazma*, *Hamr*, *Messiria*, *Rizagat*, *Ta'isha*, *Habbaniya*. All *Baggara* have shared physical characteristics, costumes, dances, religion, food, and in general a common culture and way of life. However, many of the *Hamar* are now settled in villages. For their livelihood, the *Kabbabish* depend upon sheep, goats and camels. They are concentrated in North Kordofan but also inhabit the Northern and Darfur regions.

The majority of the state's population are settled farmers who depend 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 to be insurance in the case of crop failure. Certain wealthy groups raise large numbers of sheep and camels for cash. Approximately 36% of the

farming households maintain a secondary occupation as a subsidiary source of income, including occasional labor such as carpentry for men (Hassan, 2005:3). Women are involved in productive activities such as making handicrafts, food and tea. The cash return basically benefits the primary producers, whether the income is obtained from private gum Arabic production or seasonal farming. However, people continue to share their products and resources with those in need, including relatives, neighbors or poor families. Sharing is practiced with mutual concern and enthusiasm as part of the traditional *Takaful* (social justice and solidarity) framework.

Communities' Needs and Challenges

The rural areas of North Kordofan are characterized by widespread poverty, inadequate or no basic human amenities and supporting infrastructure, a high dependence on subsistence agriculture and a lack of job opportunities. Most villages in the area suffer from water shortage, limited or poor education and health services, and an absence of markets and storage facilities.

Water availability and quality is a significant concern for all who reside there. The primary 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, particularly during the summer season; and the high cost of spare parts, mainly for water pumps. The project's area lies in the arid zone, where access to an adequate and safe water supply is a pre-requisite for all development activities. Sometimes people, generally women and children, must walk for over five kilometers to reach water yards (Mukhtar, 2002:8). A sustainable water supply has been continually

identified by communities as a primary problem and priority. Mukhtar (2002) identifies the major constraints on the satisfactory provision of drinking water: the lack of financial resources, appropriate technologies and a proper water-management system. Mukhtar proposes the replacement of existing technology with electrical and submersible pumps, which can ensure a sufficient quantity and quality of water. Research participants indicated that they spent much of their resources and effort on digging wells and searching for water sources. They also revealed that they raised funds and contributed their own labor to constructing wells and digging shallow ponds.

The second priority is education. Most villages have primary schools, but these are not large enough to accommodate the great number of school-aged children; all suffer from a shortage of teachers, equipment and books (Hassan, 2005). Some boys and girls have to travel to the towns or large villages to attend secondary schools. Meanwhile, if the village has no primary school, girls are not permitted to travel to the nearby villages to pursue study. The research participants justified this as a protective measure, in arguing that girls would be unsafe if walking alone. However, even boys cannot be sent to study outside the village until the ages of eight or nine (Sheikh-FGD, Dar El-Salam).

Regarding education, people had their own unique perspectives. They were aware of the importance of education for both men and women. A positive impact of male migration for labor is contact with other cultures, which has opened up opportunities for girls to enroll in formal schools and acquire a higher level of education. In contrast, for many of those who live in the villages, female education is not regarded to be of

high importance, especially if the family is poor. When limited household resources constrain families from sending all of their children to school, it is typically the girls who lose out in this equation. In general, both boys and girls are disadvantaged if their families are poor and cannot afford to pay the costs of accommodation and schooling outside the village. During a focus group discussion in the Bara area, a village leader summarized the local attitudes to the importance of education:

‘We can now see how the lives of people who have left the villages and gone 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. In the villages that have many educated and influential politicians, you can find all services, education is the way to develop our village’ (VL-FGD/ Bara).

لقد تغيرت حياة الناس الذين غادروا القرية للعيش في الخرطوم والمدن القريبة، إنهم يعودون لقضاء الإجازات، وقد تعلم أبنائهم وهم في صحة جيدة. إن القرى التي بها عدد من المتعلمين والسياسيين تبدو مختلفة وبها كثير من الخدمات لأن التعليم هو السبب الوحيد للتطور.

It is clear that the participants made the link between education and the level of people’s capabilities to establish productive relationships, access resources and achieve development. Despite a lack of government responsiveness and accountability, some villages in the area were successful in their development efforts. These villages have no influential government officials among their residents but have a long history of educational opportunities, which have enabled them to survive and achieve some form of internal development. For example, the village of Wad El-Saied was situated in the project site but was not selected for any interventions, due to

the project's perception of it as one of the better-off villages. The village accommodated 500 households and numerous associations, including a Village Popular Committee, youth club, religious groups, women's social associations, Red Crescent (RC) and an educational committee. The women's associations coordinated many joint programs, particularly with the RC, educational committee and youth club. Several nutrition and first aid training courses were implemented as the outcome of collective efforts with the RC. They also organized an annual fundraising campaign to support local schools and group weddings, which became a tradition in many villages. The village enjoys many public services, including a large co-educational elementary school which was established in 1953 and accommodates 643 children 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 villagers had also continued their secondary and university education elsewhere (SH-FGD, interview). This resulted in large numbers of highly educated professionals, originally from the village, working in large cities or abroad, mainly in Saudi Arabia and the Gulf states. General observations, such as the presence of cars and trucks and the style of the buildings, reflect the differences of this village in comparison to others. Interviewees from the project's participating villages related these differences to the influence played by education and the contributions of educated people. Focus group participants attested to the absence of government authorities and expressed their doubts regarding any significant achievements to be made by development or relief organizations. They indicated that the development manifest in their village was initiated and implemented by grassroots organizations. Nevertheless, people

believed that communities could not do everything alone, and that transparent and efficient government assistance could generate great change.

The development of transport and communication systems was another community priority. The existence of well-developed infrastructure supporting a transportation system can save lives, especially in marginal rural areas threatened by drought and famine. The lack of transportation and its high cost can affect the ability of traders to respond to a crisis and transport food or fodder from other areas. This means that even if people are able to purchase food or fodder for their animals they may not be able to receive it, which can contribute to famine. The villagers of Bara recounted their experience with the dry season, which may pose threats 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 to be available elsewhere. 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 would not have heard our girls singing: we wish to go to Khartoum, where the president sleeps, and where everything is in heaps’ (RP-FGD/ Bara).

لقد واجهتنا مشكلة الجفاف في عام 2005م. ونفقت الحيوانات
لقلة العلف، وكان يمكن أن نحصل على العلف لو ساعدتنا الحكومة،
ولكنها لم تفعل، فالحكومة تخدم سكان الخرطوم. ألا تسمعين أغنية
بناتنا (أنا عايزة أمشي الخرطوم مكان الرئيس بنوم والطيارة بتقوم.

Local people have extensive knowledge of their own problems and needs. In Bara, the participants used the problem tree technique to identify problems, causes and solutions. Apart from poor drinking water, education and health services, which are common problems in most North Kordofan villages, the participants identified the decline of agricultural productivity as one of the main problems specific to the area. They associated this with the decline of soil fertility, lack of agricultural extension services, spread of agricultural pests and diseases, deficiency of improved seeds, shortage of finance, and desertification. They also discerned the consequences of poor agricultural productivity; the decline in incomes, shortage of food and increasing migration to other cities. They believed that the improvement of agricultural productivity could lead to their other problems being solved more easily.

Poverty, Capability and Actions

The poverty levels of the project sites point to an overall rural poverty level of 70% (IFAD: 2005:3). Employing PRA wealth ranking, research participants used indicators such as land, number and type of livestock, style of building, number of rooms and commercial assets to rank well-being. Each indicator was given a score. Neither the scores nor the indicators employed were similar in all villages. Despite no great variation between most villages, there remained some features, such as building styles and the existence of cars and trucks, which indicated that a few villages differed in socio-economic conditions. This may explain why there were variations in terms of indicators and scores. In one village, women's clothes, jewels, cars and trucks were utilized as indicators, and those managing the village shops and services, such as flour and oil mills, were classified as rich.

In selected villages in UmRuwaba, I used the wealth ranking technique to explore the changes engineered by the project and people's perceptions of poverty measurement. According to the participants' own wealth ranking criteria, poor households are those which possess less than a five-hectare farm, and are not capable of cultivating this on account of being unable to afford to prepare the land and purchase agricultural inputs. They instead must work for other people during the rainy season to satisfy their imperative needs of food, clothes and medicine. They classified those with only one room as poor. Most of the poor do not send all their children to school, because they cannot pay the annual school fees and buy stationery. The poor cannot afford to buy medicine, whether or not it is stocked in the village. Middle class households generally own five to ten hectares and some farm inputs. Household members cultivate their own land, which means that they have surplus food and savings to survive the farming season without needing to seek supplementary income. They usually own a house accommodating two rooms and a veranda, send their children to elementary school and can afford to pay for health services and medicine available within the village. Rich households own more than 50 hectares; some have over 100 hectares and own all agricultural inputs. The rich can afford to hire laborers on their farms and rent land to others for cultivation. They have large houses of three or more rooms which built with durable material. They have resources to pay for their children's education until university levels, and often obtain external health services and medicine from towns.

For example, in *UmRuwaba 2*, 73% of the population is classified as poor, 17% as middle class, while 10% were identified as wealthy. In this village, levels of socio-economic

well-being are slightly higher compared to other villages, thus people employed a greater number of ranking indicators. Besides land, animals, and the size of a house, other assets were used to rank the wealth of a household, including small enterprises, trucks, having family members working overseas, women's jewels and expensive dresses. Women ranked as members of poor households did not own gold or expensive dresses. In middle class households, women own two to three pieces of gold, while in wealthy households women wear a lot of gold and expensive dresses, such as the traditional female Sudanese dress (*Tu'ob*), which can cost up to US\$ 150. Women differentiated between different styles, materials and manufacturers in their categorization.

Positions of privileged social status or leadership were never mentioned as criteria or as a priority. This can be attributed to people's unique understanding of leadership and representation. This was perceived as incurring obligations and responsibilities rather than privileges. It was observed that most committee leaders were from the middle class category or teachers.

In general, large numbers of families in the project area were unable to retain their own labor surplus. Often poor families, instead of investing in their land, work for wealthy landowners to meet their immediate needs. Those poor families who manage to cultivate their own land usually sell their products immediately following harvest and thus at low prices. Wealthy traders from inside and outside the area purchase at these low prices and arrange for transportation to the main centers and/or stockpile the products until the prices increase. The poor have no cooperative associations to facilitate the transportation, storage and marketing of their products, nor do

they have any sustainable sources of alternative income to aid their survival if they decide to wait for prices to rise.

The lack of employment opportunities in villages has forced almost all young males to migrate to nearby cities and to the national capital, particularly during the dry season (January-June). It was acknowledged that migrant income provides great support to their families during this period, although this income apparently did not count as a sustainable source. People viewed it as very limited and only adequate to help families survive until the new farming season. Almost all migrants returned during autumn, either to cultivate their land or work on the farms of the rich.

In North Kordofan, people's actions were guided by the basic needs of survival and security. Their social systems appeared to be constructed according to these needs. The following section examines these systems and explains how local communities have managed to adopt internal initiatives without external support.

Developing Survival Strategies

For a long time, indigenous participatory development approaches focused on addressing key priorities. This entailed the provision of drinking water, building schools and mosques, and helping each other to cultivate their land. The research participants related the various events of consequence that occurred during the last hundred years, such as the famines which took place in 1906, 1945 and 1984. During 1984/85, some left their villages for the nearby cities or other regions, most returning after the crisis was over. Some villages managed to survive through cooperation and solidarity between the members of the community. The villagers in *UmRuwaba 3* (not

covered by the project) are an example of a community that developed a survival strategy in case of difficulty or crisis. The focus group and PRA participants proudly described their experiences of the 1984 famine crisis and 1998 fire disaster. During the famine, the community decided not to temporarily flee the village and to form 'an emergency committee' composed of the *Sheikh*, religious leaders and influential members of the community. This committee suggested that every household should declare what they possessed in terms of grains, animals, fodder, money or gold. The committee divided the village into three quarters and formed sub-committees, each responsible for one quarter. The people in each quarter cooked and ate together. The members of the community who resided in towns made arrangements among themselves to dispatch continuous support. This was to last for seven months until the crisis was over. The participants revealed that no other external assistance, including from the government or relief agencies, was received by the village during the famine. As for the 1998 fire disaster, the village experienced fires which destroyed 65 houses, causing 40% of families to lose their assets, including grains, plants, animals and shops. Throughout the fire disaster, people coordinated actions, donated their resources to help rebuild the 65 houses and provided food and clothing for the victims.

Two years ago the committees in *UmRuwaba 3* sponsored a group wedding. They organized *Nafir* for building new houses and organized fundraising activities to cover the wedding expenses of food, clothes, perfumes and furniture. The village *Sheikh* explained:

'We managed to survive after each disaster. We know that 'these organizations' 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/ Um- Ruwaba 3).

لقد تمكنا من البقاء بعد كل كارثة، ونحن نعظم أن هذه المنظمات لا تحل مشاكلنا فقد رأيناهم في بعض القرى، لذا لم نطلب منهم المساعدة. والمشكلة في الحكومة وهي التي يجب أن تعرف مشاكلنا وأن تعمل على حلها

Political Framework

There is a widespread 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 organizations (GROs). In general, the weak relationship between the state and local communities may result in the exclusion of some of the latter from access to resources and services. Despite this reality, the research participants demonstrated that they preferred to establish a relationship of mutual trust with the project management and local state institutions. They believed that if good relationships do not accord them any benefits, confrontation will certainly never do so. They expressed concern that the government authorities might not respond equally to all grassroots organizations in the area, based on the differing nature of relationships. For example, the members of GROs in *UmRuwaba 2* spoke with pride about their ability to establish strong and cordial relationships with government officials, which resulted in the establishment of a rural hospital, market, and secondary schools. They spoke about developing personal relationships, proffering 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 originated from this village, which could explain how and why certain GROs succeeded in establishing beneficial relationships with government authorities.

Despite the widespread features of solidarity and cooperation within both homogenous and heterogeneous communities, there were still some leaders who made contact and worked with the government for their own benefit. A member of the Popular Development Works (PDW) argued that there was no possibility of the organization's coordination with the IFAD project (NKRDP) or the authorities of the locality. It appeared that both parties had their own agendas behind rejecting collaboration with national development NGOs.

'The government institutions refused to coordinate with our organization because they prefer to establish relationships with local leaders and some influential individuals. For example, we arranged to provide poor farmers with improved seeds, either free of charge or at a reduced price. We bought the government's seeds from the market and distributed them to the farmers' (MM-SSI/ PDW).

رفض مشروع الإيفاد التنسيق معنا وصمم على التنسيق مع
القادة المحليين وبعض الأفراد من ذوي النفوذ، مثلاً، نحن نقوم بشراء
البذور المحسنة وهي ذات البذور التي توزعها الحكومة على القيادات
المحلية التي تقوم ببيعها في السوق ومن ثم نشترها ونبيعها مرة أخرى

Despite these negative practices there has been a shift in the thinking of key government officials, particularly the

planners at North Kordofan State level. The following section illustrates this shift.

New Administrative Shift

According to the government's recently amended decentralization policy, (KD-SSI, El-Obeid) North Kordofan State now comprises five localities: Bara, UmRuwaba, Gabrat El-Sheikh, Shiekan and Sodri. The five localities are made up of nineteen administrative units. The new governance system, approved and implemented in 2004, initiated the establishment of localities to replace the old provincial system. The objective of establishing localities was the decentralization of resources and initiation of a comprehensive development plan. The Ministry of Finance and Labor Force (MFLF) has assumed responsibility for developing mechanisms to enhance cooperation within localities and promote the new system. 75% of the manpower employed in state institutions was transferred to the localities, and four major departments were established at the locality level to absorb the transferred staff. These departments include education and social services, engineering and health, finance, and agriculture. The new staff began to receive technical training. The state government and the MFLF have great expectations that both the peace process in Sudan and the greater exploitation and export of oil will lead to more resources being allocated towards development. The MFLF established the following coordination units: 1) the Development Council, which aims to coordinate government efforts and organize regular meetings to agree on the disbursement of resources according to needs and plans; 2) the Local Government Coordination Council, which leads strategic planning at local level by setting out guidelines, formulating strategies, assessing the capacities and performance of localities

and creating productive relationships between localities, the state and local NGOs; and 3) a Technical Unit, which coordinates with grassroots organizations to facilitate access to financial institutions and enhance the capacity of their members. In 2005 the MFLF started to produce an annual working plan, as government professionals at the highest levels have become aware of the need to change the traditional system. This annual plan included the programs of the state agencies, UN agencies, and international and national NGOs. As a key director at the MFLF explained,

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

إن إتباع نهج المشاركة الشعبية يحتاج إلى شجاعة وقدرة على التخلي عن السلطات، ونظام إعادة توزيع السلطات قد لا يعجب الكثيرين ولكنهم يحتاجون إلى التكيف مع هذا الوضع. لقد جربنا نظام المشاركة فكانت النتيجة على حسب تقرير المراجع الخارجي أن هناك تراجع في الفساد بنسبة 42 % .

Another example was taken from the experience of the Forests National Corporation (FNC) with the community forestry program. As part of its agro-forestry program, the FNC adopted a participatory management system in North Kordofan State. This entailed the planting of *Acacia seyal* and *Acacia senegalensis*, which both produce gum Arabic, which is a considerable cash crop. This plantation scheme utilized both communal and private land and offered a promising source of cash, at low capital costs, for locals. The forest plantations provided the villagers with fodder, medicine and wood for fuel, especially during the dry seasons. These changes imply that bureaucratic institutions have the potential to change their policies and adopt a collaborative system. This change requires support from existing development organizations and projects, such as the NKRDP. However, despite the NKRDP's claim about building institutional capacity at different levels, no evidence illustrated the project's involvement in these efforts.

National and Regional NGOs

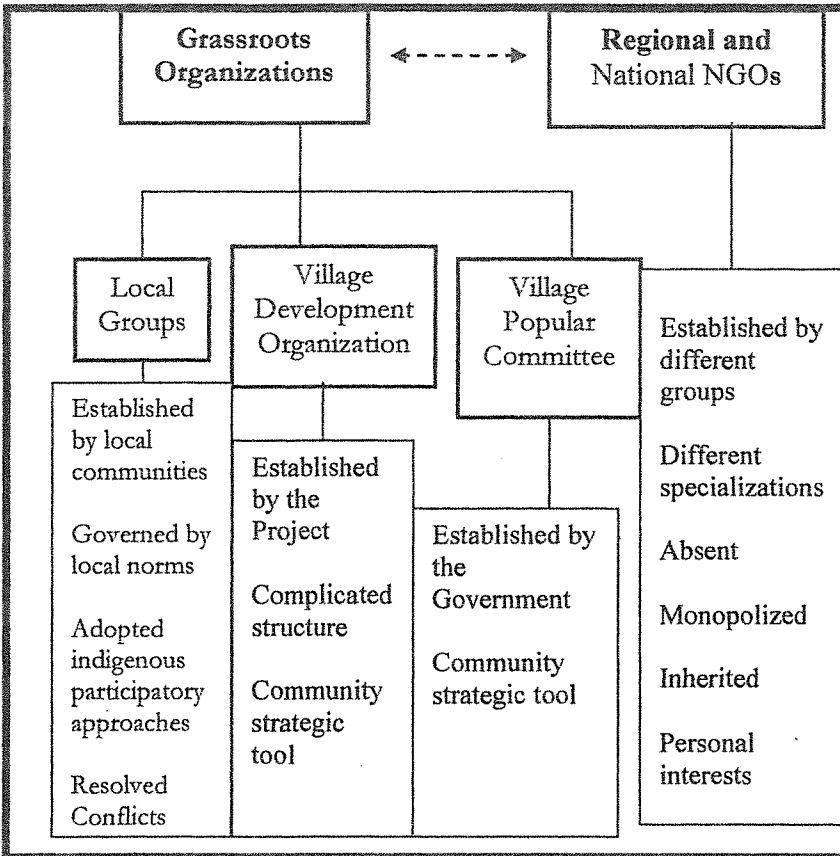
In North Kordofan State there are numerous local non-governmental organizations (NGOs). Most of these are not currently active or locally-trusted, but are eager to renew their registration and have representation at public or formal meetings (SPO-SI, El-Obeid). These regional NGOs have a similar reputation 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 organizations, eight of these being international (UNDP, WFP, UNICEF, Plan Sudan, CARE, Islamic Relief, Red Crescent and IFAD). Most of the regional NGOs were established in response to previous emergencies that occurred in the area, particularly during the

1980s. Except for the Popular Development Works (PDW), all the national and regional organizations assumed to be operating in North Kordofan State are completely absent from the two localities (Bara and UmRuwaba) where the NKRDP was active, as shown in Fig 7.1. The regional NGOs justified this particular absence by arguing that they possessed insufficient resources and had to depend on volunteers without ample time for community work (KM-SSI/ Hawa Organization). At the NGOs' workshop in El-Obeid however, which was funded by UNDP and attended by members of regional and national NGOs, the participants referred to international partners and their own participation in international events. They therefore implied that these organizations have the capacity to develop networks and obtain access to resources.

As aforementioned, the Popular Development Works (PDW) is the only national organization that works in the area of the project site. PDW was established in 2000 by a small group of professionals with university qualifications, who gained their experience working with development agencies in North Kordofan. Six of the seven members of the organization are volunteers, proffering their holidays and several weekly hours to provide service. A single member is the coordinator, paid a living allowance from the project's funds. The organization is located in a small one-room office in Khartoum with a portable computer. PDW has knowledge of local social and religious organizations and practices and customary law. The group acquired an awareness of participatory techniques, such as PRA methods, drama and puppet theatre, through their work with international NGOs. They succeeded in gaining support for several small projects targeting villages in the UmRuwaba locality in North Kordofan State. Almost all

PDW's funds are directed to field projects. The organization's office in Khartoum acts as a central coordination unit which plans and makes contact with donors, government institutions, and permanent or temporary migrants to Khartoum.

Figure 7. 1: NGOs the Case of North Kordofan State



Source: Fieldwork Information

Popular Development Works (PDW) is the only national NGO out of hundreds which has succeeded in establishing links with grassroots organizations in the UmRuwaba locality. Through these contacts, it has involved people in planning and implementing field activities in many villages. Its main objective is to address underdevelopment issues. It developed its own approach, which concentrates on personal contacts and on extending existing local organizations and practices. PDW has devoted effort to building up the capacities of grassroots organizations and encouraging communities in each village to establish a centre (*Dar*) where people can meet, conduct training and awareness programs, and accommodate visitors.

In UmRuwaba locality, Popular Development Works (PDW) organized sessions to enable collective identification and analysis of problems and to share their experiences and knowledge with communities. Based on communities' priorities and interests, PDW prepared project proposals and sent these to donors. The final drafting of proposals and the contacting of donors and government authorities were carried out by this NGO; local people's role was mainly to offer ideas and to eventually implement projects. The villagers showed little interest in designing proposals or travelling to seek out technical and financial support. They acknowledged that they did not have the time, resources and capacity for these activities. They also expressed their full trust in and acceptance of the PDW operations and members. A villager in the UmRuwaba area explained that

'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/ UmRuwaba).

إن أعضاء منظمة التنمية الشعبية هم جزء من هذا المجتمع، إنهم يعرفون ما تحتاجه القرية ويقدمون خدماتهم. إنهم يوضحون للناس أهدافهم ويحددون اجتماعات منفصلة للرجال والنساء قبل أن يحددوا اجتماعات مشتركة.

The Popular Development Works (PDW) did not enter villages with pre-planned interventions; different activities were implemented in different villages. The PDW organized separate meetings for men and women before assembling people for joint meetings. A female member described the organization's approach:

'In each village and based on the existing groups, such as *Sandug*, coffee groups and education committees, 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 interests. We also encourage coordination between women and men rather than forcing them to form mixed committees' (FM-SSI/ PDW)

نحن ننفذ أنشطتنا بالتعاون مع المجموعات الموجودة بالقرية، فهناك الصندوق ومجموعة القهوة، ونحن نشجع هذه المجموعات للمشاركة في بعض الأنشطة ونسق بينهم دون أن نجبرهم على الانضمام إلى مجموعة بعينها أو العمل مع مجموعة مختلفة،

The PDW encouraged local women's coffee groups to act as women's committees. Since they had to interact with men's organizations, the groups decided to select an old woman who was respected by all the community to speak on behalf of the group. In rural communities, this type of woman is typically

called *Al-Hakama'a*, which means 'the ruler.' The term is usually applied to a woman who speaks with wisdom and provides consultation to both men and women. In the villages in which PDW operated, the women's committees selected an *Al-Hakama'a* to be chairwoman, in addition to an assistant who was young, active and educated. The PDW used the women's coffee groups as a channel to reach women and involve them in the production of extension material which promotes the concepts of sharing and cooperation. This extension material developed ways of communicating new ideas through drama, songs and social entertainment. Women's groups became the producers of these forms, which subsequently achieved renown all over the locality; for example, adults memorized their poems. The PDW utilized these groups to discuss economic, social and political issues and to facilitate participation in development activities. For the NGO, participation is considered to be a single multi-dimensional package, as both a means and an end in itself. As a member of PDW revealed,

'We combined the coffee sessions, *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 poems. During public meetings and awareness and training programs, different groups present their songs' (MM-SSI/PDW).

ونحن نستفيد من أنشطة التعبير والدراما وحلقات القهوة،
فالناس لديهم مواهب عدة كالشعر والغناء، ونحن نوجههم لبيت
المعلومات والرسائل المفيدة من خلال تلك الأنشطة.

As explained earlier, the Popular Development Works (PDW) is the only national NGO based in Khartoum that works directly with grassroots organizations in UmRuwaba locality. It has aided these grassroots organizations in overcoming their

isolation by attempting to establish links between them and international and national development agencies. The PDW's contributions gained acceptance and appreciation due to success in communicating with communities and donors, accommodating common views and concerns and working as a caring and supportive voluntary team. Unfortunately, the PDW has limited resources and receives only minimal funding from international donors. However, the PDW's experiences in North Kordofan did create a new understanding of the role of local organizations and raised concerns about the strategies of international agencies and the behavior of their staff. The interaction between the PDW and NKRDP will be examined in the next chapter, in which I analyze the project's approaches and mechanisms.

Indigenous Participatory Concepts

The villages in the project site are small settlements of between 50 to 550 households, the largest being composed of many tribes such as the *Gawamaa*, *Baza 'a* and *Hamar*, with the smallest normally belonging to one tribe. In general there are no ethnic conflicts or domination by any ethnic group. The extended family is the basic unit of social organization, and kinship relations are the backbone of the social system. People of different tribal backgrounds live alongside each other, mixing through marriage and social interactions. The histories of most villages date back to the 18th century, while people have memorized events dating from the beginning of the 20th century. The societies adhere to certain social norms and values, with more spontaneous actions of community work, welcoming visitors and sharing joys and calamities. It was observed that the villages largely share social organizations, a similar way of life and language. The size and construction

style of houses are similar, with little variation between wealth and poverty evident, particularly to outsiders, unless identified by villagers themselves. Providing families with income and nourishment is the responsibility of adults and is achieved by different means. In these communities, there is a belief that there is much work to be done which cannot be performed alone.

The structure of the community, especially at village level, adheres to the spirit of solidarity. Community solidarity is based on cooperation and sharing among groups as family members, relatives and neighbors. Even if a person lives alone without children or extended family, or is a stranger, there is always someone who is willing to help. When people are confronted with challenges, others may respond and contribute individually or collectively, within the limits of their capabilities.

Those who choose to migrate to cities or abroad are never severed from the social and cultural backgrounds of their rural homelands. They regularly visit their villages and maintain familial obligations; in some cases these obligations can extend to relatives, neighbors and friends.

Motivating Values

The word 'values' here refers to morals and was used by many research participants to describe the qualities of certain individuals, such as leaders, wise members of the community, or teachers. Values may be in the form of religious teachings or admirable traditions. Everyday language is full of proverbs and poem extracts that praise the meanings and values of participation. Proverbs are part of this oral culture, often being recited by adults to legitimate certain actions or express

commonly held values. They often encourage sharing and cooperation; people 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 most common proverbs observed were ‘God with the group,’ which illustrates the importance of helping others 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 the very small fruit of the Sisyphus tree; this fruit cannot be divided into two pieces. Describing the division of *El-Nabaga* between highlights the importance of sharing and giving. In Sudanese spoken language, the term ‘scholars’ is used to imply religious teachers or advisors; as scholars are seen as inspirational, this term gives the proverb more power. It was observed that people always referred to religious values during meetings and conversations. A concept such as that ‘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 frequently during discussions and interviews. It appeared that participation was viewed as ‘a value and a way of life.’ These participatory values bring people together in support of each other or to carry out community work.

Working for a Common Good

Local communities follow specific traditions and practices when required to work collectively on initiatives or for a common good. These traditions are constructed around the concepts of caring, sharing and obligations. Research participants identified events and activities that brought the whole community together, such as the establishment of schools, water pumps, mosques, houses and farming operations. People also participated in various activities to aid

individuals who perform particular services in the community. For example, they donated or allocated land and organized *Nafir* to farm in order to support the teachers or the midwife.

At the village level, many activities required cooperation and mutual assistance, such as farming, funeral services, preparation for weddings, welcoming a new-born baby and caring for the sick and elderly. During the rainy season, people also cooperated to carry out farming chores such as planting, weeding and harvesting. Labor shortages, whether for farm or community activities, were viewed as a particular problem. Some families moved outside the villages to reside on their farms in temporary huts, returning if something happened in the village or for Friday prayer. The majority left their homes in the morning and returned before sunset. Very few could afford to hire labor or had enough household members to undertake labor-intensive tasks. To overcome these difficulties, people practiced different participatory models for extended periods. For example, the participatory practice of *Nafir*, or mobilization, presents a framework to reciprocate assistance and alleviate the hazards, risks and hardships facing individuals or the community as a whole (Mohammed, 2001). *Nafir* urges those who have completed their own work, whether farming, construction or other activity, to help those limited by their sickness or poverty. This concept was expanded to motivate people to carry out community affairs in general, and hence implement collective projects. *Nafir* is commonly practiced during the rainy season, as during this time, there is a greater amount of work to be done within a short period of time (July-November). Those with few household members usually invited the community to help them complete their work. Community members whose services are required around the

clock or at short notice, such as traders with village shops, flour mill operators, midwives and health service providers, are exempted from such communal work obligations. As a midwife in Dar El-Salam, Bara, elaborated,

‘I used to participate in *Nafir*. I also used to travel outside our village, attending weddings or funerals 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 on the same day. Moreover, I do not have to participate in the *Nafir*’ (MW-SSI/ Bara).

لقد تأملت وأصبحت قابلة. في الماضي كنت أشارك في النفير وأسافر إلى خارج القرية، ولكن ظروف عملي الآن تضطرني إلى التواجد الدائم بالقرية والعودة من السفر في نفس اليوم.

The practice of *Nafir* was socially constructed in relation to gender and other values. I observed that people maintain great adherence to old practices. During a mixed focus group discussion, an influential village leader in *UmRuwaba 1* detailed his personal views on the practice of *Nafir* and the gender mainstreaming employed by the project:

‘Despite being a member of the ‘IFAD committee’ I only invited the men to participate in the *Nafir* and help me finish the farm operations. Yesterday, thirty-four men turned up and volunteered for three hours. Last week our neighbor, a female farmer, invited women only for *Nafir*. However To accept the project’s 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 those were better and do not hurt anyone’ (IFL-FGD/ UmRuwaba 1).

أنا عضو في لجنة الصندوق التابعة للمشروع وبالرغم من ذلك عندما نفذت النفير للزراعة دعوت الرجال للمشاركة وشارك أربعة وثلاثون شخص ولمدة ثلاث ساعات. في الأسبوع الماضي دعت إحدى المزارعات بعض الأسر للمشاركة في النفير. قبول فكرة المشروع الخاصة بضرورة وجود الرجال والنساء في لجنة واحدة لا تعني أن نلتزم بذلك في حياتنا العادية، خاصة إذا كانت تقاليدنا أفضل ولا تسبب الضرر .

In the case of community activities, those refusing to participate are sanctioned and must pay a fine that is determined by their personal associations. For family and individual affairs, non-participation is even tougher to tolerate, being regarded as neglect and exclusion. There is no discrimination in this case between leaders and ordinary people, or rich or poor. However, those with power have greater responsibilities. Therefore, these sanctions will continue to be a threat for anyone who chooses not to fulfill his or her personal obligations, regardless of their social status.

‘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/ UmRuwaba 4).

إذا جاءتك دعوة للمشاركة في النفير من أجل بناء منزل أو لعمل زراعي ولم تشارك فلا يمكنك حينها أن تدعو الناس ليشاركوك أو ليساعدوك .

When speaking of corruption and bad behaviors, the participants always refer to male actions. The communities believe that women do not perform bad deeds. Generally, 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 ashamed of his conduct' (ST-FGD/UmRuwaba 3).

مجتمعنا لا يقبل السلوك الفاسد، والمفسد عليه أن يغادر القرية
ويجعل أسرته دائماً تحس بالعار من تصرفاته .

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 organizations. The following section examines the representation process.

Representation

Participation in community affairs is always organized and managed by local associations. People with a completed secondary school education or who work as teachers have a higher social status and are always selected to represent the community, take part in grassroots organizations, or conduct tasks that require recording and reporting. These organizations are usually formed through consultation and negotiation, a time-consuming process whereby members are selected. This selective process safeguards the community from tension and conflict. The grassroots organizations discuss diverse community development issues, including school construction or maintenance, provision of equipment or activities related to drinking water, to organizing social events. The organizations usually make decisions on their own initiative and inform people how an activity is to be implemented. People participate according to their abilities. In the case of new marriages, communities organize *Nafir* to build couples' new homes and

share in expenses. The household acts as a basis for participation in community affairs. A member of the Village Popular Committee in Bara area revealed how community works operate:

‘Participation in development activities is more or less a household obligation. When we have to do maintenance of the schools, we meet and decide what we will do and how much it will 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 costs’ (MVPC-FGD/ Bara).

المشاركة في أنشطة التنمية تكون عبر الأسر فمثلاً عندما نقوم بصيانة المدارس فإننا نحدد ماذا نحتاج، وكل شخص يساهم حسب قدرته، وإذا حدث نقص فإننا نطلب من الميسورين تكملته

Local communities overcame some difficulties created by the project strategy, using the village-contributory system. Some wealthy members gave donations to ensure the involvement of poor families in the assemblies and project committees, which will be examined in detail in the following chapter. However, the local meaning of this may be beyond the understanding of external planners. The locals view the protection of internal social relationship as of greater concern than the gain or loss of personal assets. For them, the values of cohesiveness and oneness should not be distorted in any situation.

In the past few decades the communities organized themselves into groups. They worked collectively to cope with and adapt to shocks that occurred due to drought, fire, diseases and pests. As discussed in Chapter Four, grassroots

organizations, such as local committees and groups, are seen to be very important components in participatory development. In this regard, the concept of leadership is crucial.

I observed that the socio-cultural network of North Kordofan communities functioned effectively and derived its legitimacy and acceptance from internal norms. Leaders could arise from ordinary and simple people. Having wise, efficient, generous and trustworthy leaders, regardless of whether they were rich and powerful, was one of these norms and constituted a prerequisite for the stability and security of the community. A famous saying known to all and recited by many research participants is that 'those who have no *kabeer* should find a *kabeer*.' *Kabeer* refers generally to a leader or elder, and explicitly to a wise, humble and respectable person.

Leadership requires qualities such as the willingness to sacrifice, a grasp of knowledge and communication skills. Apparently, certain families inherited leadership positions and these family members would prepare for this succession. The research participants believed that the members of grassroots organizations would not have been selected unless they had something to offer, such as wisdom, sincerity, power, wealth, courage, knowledge, external contacts or the ability to negotiate. Leaders had to demonstrate that they held the deserving qualities and abilities to justify their position.

Regarding grassroots organizations, many associations and committees, such as the *El-Goodeya* Council and Native Administration, were established to provide social and legal services and help maintain a peaceful coexistence. The next section discusses how local grassroots organizations can play a crucial role in serving communities by speaking on their behalf and protecting their rights.

Grassroots Organizations

In the project sites there were many grassroots organizations, established before the project to perform various social and religious functions (outlined in Fig 7.2). The traditional leaders in most villages remain the guardians and motivators and do not lead the grassroots committees. Members of grassroots organizations are popularly selected, and members choose one among themselves as a leader while the remainders form the executive committee.

These organizations were given names with local variations, including committees, associations or councils. Grassroots organizations are also accorded the following terms: native administration, *El-Goodeya* council, village popular committee, migrants' organizations and women's groups.

Native Administration and Customary Law

The Native Administration is the customary hierarchical institution of *Sheikhs*, *Umdas* and *Nazirs*. This system has predated the modern state in its responsibility for maintaining customary law, including laws governing the allocation and management of natural resources and land, such as forests and rangeland. The Native Administration (NAD) was dissolved by the May regime in 1969. As of 1996 the present government has made efforts to revive the NAD, encouraging it to resume its traditional functions. The NAD and the modern system of local government have had to develop formal and informal inter-linkages and coordination systems. The NAD is officially accountable to local government authorities at the locality level, as it deals with community issues and establishes policies and regulations governing rural resource management. For example, from mid-July to mid-January, the NAD sets some

areas aside for grazing, while others are preserved for farming and gum Arabic plantations. The village *Sheikh* marks the start of this season with *Rafaa el-asa* (stick rising), a symbolic reference to punishment for those who break the law. Customary law states that, after the conclusion of the farming season, agricultural land is subject to public grazing rights. Simultaneously some resources, particularly land, are also set aside for those with little or no assets in order that they can meet their basic needs and stabilize their livelihood.

Despite government legislation, the Native Administration and customary law play an important additional role in communities' access to land and communal resources. For example, local communities resolve conflicts through the *El-Goodeya* system and local courts, while customary law is based on social norms that encourage forgiveness and acceptance.

El-Goodeya

El-Goodeya means 'mediation-acceptance and generosity.' This system is a unique traditional Sudanese approach that was adopted by local communities in rural areas to resolve conflict. The mediators might be the village *Sheikh* or a religious or community leader, but must always be the most respectable members of the community. The mediation takes place in the *Sheikh's* or religious leader's house. According to local social norms, conflicting parties must respect the mediators' decision, even if it is not regarded as the best solution by one or both parties (Egeimi, 2001:19-21). People refer to the mediator as 'the one who has a needle that he uses to cure a wound,' similar to the task of the surgeon. The mediators are responsible for implementing *El-Goodeya*

procedures and ensuring that its rules are respected and accepted by all parties.

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

The mediation process normally starts with formal introductory statements praising the concept of peaceful resolution in order to please God. People have trust in and great respect for the mediators. In most cases, the parties end up forgiving each other and resolving their conflict. The *Sheikh* of El-Naeem village (focus group discussion) commented that 'those who refuse *El-Goodeya* are always losers, because God loves those who accept *El-Goodeya*.' It is therefore of social value to accept *El-Goodeya* instead of taking a case to the formal court. These practices maintain the culture of peace and sustain assets and practices required for livelihoods. A member of the Village Popular Committee in Bara reflected on his views:

'The mediator should be fair otherwise this system will collapse. No one will respect the Native Administration if the leaders side with one person against another and/or if they receive personal benefits' (MVPC-FGD/ Bara 1).

الوسيط في حل النزاعات يجب أن يكون عادلاً وإلا فسوف ينهار نظام الجودة ولن يحترم الناس الإدارة الأهلية إذا وقفت مع شخص ضد الآخر ظلماً.

The members of the NAD and *El-Goodeya* council are seen as inspiring leaders who care about all the community members and who maintain an acceptable system which functions durably. The research participants believed that these leaders should not be involved in the project committees, because the latter belonged to the project and represented certain people, not the whole community. This understanding explicitly forecasted the future of the project's committees, which were usually referred to by local communities as 'IFAD's committee' and not as a village development organization as was recorded in the project's documents.

The Village Popular Committees (VPCs)

The VPCs were initiated in 1989 by the government and have been supported by the government ever since. The intention was that they would replace political parties by acting as a form of political alliance with the government. They were expected to provide some social services and establish contacts with government authorities. An academic at DSRI explained how people responded when the government enforced this organization:

'The villages' leaders in NKS are supporters of the opposition party. When the government formed

these VPCs these leaders either accepted the new organization or became members. They believe this is the only way to get the government's support' (MAI-SSI/ DSRI).

معظم قيادات القرى في منطقة كردفان من أنصار حزب الأمة ولكنهم إنخرطوا في اللجان الشعبية ظناً منهم أنها الطريقة الوحيدة للحصول على دعم من الحكومة .

North Kordofan populations have historically been supporters of a traditional political party which stands in opposition to the current government. Nevertheless, this did not hinder them from forming the Village Popular Committees (VPCs). People organized VPCs because they believed that they were the only effective means of communicating with the government. Village leaders formed VPCs in order to access government resources and accrue benefits for their communities. In practice, it appears that those committees without support from the ruling political party are not very useful for the community by way of contributing to development in some form.

At the village level, most of the grassroots organizations are termed 'committees,' such as education committees, mosque committees and Village Popular Committees. Those committees are dominated by men, although formally the constitution of Village Popular Committees insists on reserving two out of six committee positions for females. A member of a VPC in *Bara I* clarified this aspect:

'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 meetings for men and women to

discuss community affairs. However, we informed the two women and told them that they could attend and tell us what they think, but they never came' (MVPC-FGD/ Bara 1).

لدينا عضوتان في لجنة القرية – حسب القانون- ولكنهما لم تحضرا أي إجتماع رغم إخطارهما بإمكانية مشاركتهما في كل الإجتماعات. وعلمت العضوة قائلة: "إجتماعياً لا يبدو مقبولاً أن نجلس مع الرجال لمناقشة مواضيع عن الحكومة والمدرسة، للرجال وظائفهم وللنساء قضاياهن، فنحن لدينا النفير ومجموعات القهوة والصندوق"

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

'We cannot go and sit with men and talk about government or the 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 groups or the *Sanduaq* or *Nafir* organized by women' (FVPC-SSI/ Bara 1).

علمت العضوة قائلة: "إجتماعياً لا يبدو مقبولاً أن نجلس مع الرجال لمناقشة مواضيع عن الحكومة والمدرسة، للرجال وظائفهم وللنساء قضاياهن، فنحن لدينا النفير ومجموعات القهوة والصندوق".

Gender differentiation is not concerned with the exclusion of women or men in particular. It is about social concepts and understandings of gender, especially in the context of different social organizations, practices and customary law. For example, it is unacceptable for women to be exposed to danger or humiliation when they make a mistake; instead, men have to suffer the consequences and present

themselves to the local court. 'Gender concepts' will be examined in more detail in the next chapter.

Migrants' Organizations

Social and economic conditions have forced many rural families to migrate to more prosperous states, particularly to the capital. Employment opportunities and the abundance of education and health services attract young men to the large cities. However, those who migrate never abandon the social and cultural life of their rural homelands, especially as these migrants often leave their families behind in the villages. Even those who move elsewhere with their families typically pay regular visits to the villages. A sense of common identity is shared between migrants, whether they are those who leave with their close families to live permanently in the towns, or those who migrate during the dry season to search for jobs.

'Every year, we have to leave the village to Khartoum or Port Sudan, where there are many opportunities. We work as casual laborers or by 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 everything. Living in Khartoum is very expensive and hard; we always pray for a good rainy season so we can come back to our village and stay there' (YMP-SSI/ UmRuwaba 1).

كل سنة نذهب إلى الخرطوم وبورتسودان للعمل بصورة مؤقتة، نعيش في مجموعات وندعم بعضنا البعض. الحياة في الخرطوم مكلفة جداً ونحن دائماً ندعو الله تعالى من أجل خريف جيد لنعود إلى ديارنا. نحن نقوم بإرسال المال إلى النساء في القرية وهن يقمن بدور الرعاية والإدارة

The migrants maintain perpetually strong economic and social relationships with their families, relatives and friends in the villages. They send money to help construct and maintain community buildings such as mosques, schools and community centres. They may also aid other families who struggle to survive. These migrants usually maintain social ties and relationships among themselves, forming small associations in the three-capital cities (Khartoum, Khartoum North and Um-Durman). Such groups provide accommodation and support for new migrants, and facilitate mutual concern for each other's affairs in cases of sickness and calamities at home. They support individuals while they search for employment. They also help to resolve conflict between members of groups or with external communities. The groups are always known by the name of their home village.

Women's Groups

Gendered divisions of labor are overtly evident within these communities. All women in the villages are full-time homemakers. In each village, there are girls who attend schools in the cities and women who have graduated from universities and now work as teachers or government employees in the large cities. Women's groups exist in the villages and are concerned with a range of issues, including saving, group weddings and fund-raising for the school and mosques. For example, the *Sandug* is a well-known traditional rural institution for interest-free saving. This form of saving is initiated and managed by women in villages all over Sudan, although there is no official literature about its history and impact. Through the *Sandug*, women form a group and choose one member to be leader, called the treasurer or head of the *Sandug*, who makes proposals on the amount everyone should

be paid per week, per fortnight or per month for those employed in the formal sector. The leader ensures that the *Sandug* achieves its targets. She also collects the money and entrusts it to a single person upon collection. The members agree among themselves on who will be first and last for collection. There is always consideration for each other's circumstances; if one faced an emergency, the planned queue would be adjusted. The participants in the *Sandug* (*UmRuwaba 3*) identified their reasons for joining: firstly, to help themselves or their family; and secondly, they enjoyed being part of a group which contributes to the community. Generally, the members trusted each other and benefited from the friendly relationships. These relationships encouraged the group to consider activities other than collecting and saving money, for example, using the money to adopt a combined or similar project. In some cases a group may make a donation in support of a community project. A *Sandug* treasurer in *UmRuwaba 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 to buy special kitchen items, which we use for cooking when we have big gatherings such as weddings, funerals and public events (ST-SSI/ UmRuwaba 1).

نحن كمجموعة قررنا حفظ مبلغ من المال بعد كل صندوق،
 واستفدنا من المبلغ في شراء أواني لتستخدمها القرية في مناسباتها سواء
 أفراح أو أتراح

The idea behind the *Sandug* is to gain access to a lump sum of money that can be put to good purpose. This practice

formed the basis for a micro-finance system introduced by development projects which was given the same name locally.

Summary

The North Kordofan Rural Development Project was implemented by IFAD and the Government of the Sudan. Its main objective was to improve the living conditions of targeted communities. Its staff were all nationals with full awareness of the local Sudanese culture and how it is dominated by social relations and personal interaction. Maintaining internal relationships and contacts between the project and communities was therefore a crucial factor in facilitating the whole development process.

Regarding local communities, the research participants were able to identify the problems, needs and priorities of these. They also identified various measures that they had undertaken to overcome crises and difficulties. There was widespread agreement among participants concerning the key issues that influenced livelihoods. The following were agreed to be the most critical: the absence of local opportunities for young men; inadequate access to public services such as education, health, water and transportation; and the lack of productive partnerships between local communities, government authorities and development organizations. These factors could influence people's interactions with development providers, as well as the outcomes of participatory development processes.

This chapter highlighted the new forms of participation in decision-making institutions at the state and locality levels of North Kordofan State. Within the bureaucratic institutions of the Ministry of Finance and Labor Force and the Forests

National Corporation, the presence of key development professionals with a strong belief in the efficacy of participation has permitted creative participatory policies to emerge. This has proven that new values developed among development professionals can generate new strategies and structures. To succeed, these initiatives require support and commitment from all development actors: 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 constantly adhere to these norms. It is clear that the communities' internal values significantly influence development in their villages. Indigenous participatory practices reflect the cultural values that provide meanings and a sense of identity for local communities in North Kordofan. Evidently, the lives of the people of North Kordofan, whether they reside in the villages or have migrated to other towns or abroad, are constructed around participatory relationships of solidarity and cooperation. Leadership also plays an important role. People perceive leadership skills and wealth as deriving from God, who would not endow merely any person or group with a privileged status. The act of representation is also seen as an obligation and responsibility. Time, resources, skills and knowledge are all necessary to adequately represent communities' concerns and confront decision-making authorities.

North Kordofan Project: Approaches, Mechanisms and Outcomes

Introduction

The previous chapter introduced the North Kordofan Rural Development Project and provided information on its staffing and management systems. It suggested that to implement a participatory development program, there is a need for open dialogue, tolerance, and the free exchange of information between all development actors, particularly professionals. The previous chapter also clearly depicted the social setting of North Kordofan State. It demonstrated how people adhere to various cooperative and participatory values, which conceptualized the formation of grassroots organizations and shaped unique participatory practices.

The focus of this chapter is on the nature and potential of the project's participatory approaches and mechanisms. It reflects on how local communities responded to the project's interventions. Understanding the visions of various development actors and the strategies they used to negotiate and/or interact with others may offer insights that contribute to the knowledge and practice of participatory development. It may also inspire suggestions on how to enhance the outcomes of people's participation.

This chapter begins with an introduction to the project's strategy which shaped the participatory processes. The establishment of new village organizations, along with the project's specific interventions and outcomes, are explored in

the subsequent 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 process began by selecting villages for intervention and using PRA methods to identify local needs and priorities. The project's literature stressed the importance of coordination with other development providers in order to fully benefit from these approaches and achieve the objectives.

Selection of the Villages: the Questionable Choices

The selection of villages was based on specific criteria, such as levels of readiness and need, as outlined in Table 8.1. In practice, the most critical factor was village size. However, from the start this led to exclusion of small villages of less than 50 households, many of which were found to be the neediest (IFAD, 2004). The project's reports emphasised the selection of poor villages, although surprisingly some well-off villages with the highest quality services in the area were selected. Later on, I discovered that some influential government officials were originally from these villages. Cases such as this proved to the local communities that educated people could hold influential status and direct the flow of resources and services. A former NKRDP officer commented on the selection of targeted communities:

‘You can see that in some villages that they have many highly educated people and some influential leaders in the state government. They have

schools, a rural hospital, electricity, and various organizations, such as village graduates, youth groups and active women's groups. The village has a large number of educated women who work in towns. They do not need the project's support but the project is there. Why?' (FPO-SSI/ El-Obeid).

بعض القرى لديها عدد من المتعلمين والقادة السياسيين، لديهم مدارس ومستشفى ريفي وكهرباء ومنظمات شبابية ونسائية نشطة وكثير من النساء المتعلمات اللاتي يعملن في المدن، ورغم ذلك تجد أن لديهم مشروع إيفاد، فلماذا؟ .

Much of the criteria determining need were not considered during the implementation of the project activities. Through the semi-structured and structured interviews, it was evident that the project staff identified only two criteria upon which village selection was based: population size and living standards. In practice, all villages of fewer than one hundred households were excluded even if their living standards were worse than others. Certain criteria such as the local availability of resources and special funds for development became the conditions for excluding the poorest groups. There was a contradiction between the established criteria as set out in Table 8.1, because those who were the neediest ultimately had no resources to make available for developing the required services. However, it appeared that the project ignored the neediness criteria because it did not suit the self-help approach.

After selecting a village, the project approached the communities through village leaders to gain their initial acceptance and support. The project employed traditional communication channels such as the mosque microphone, personal contacts and grassroots organizations to disseminate information and announcements regarding its interventions.

The schools in the villages were found to be an efficient channel through which almost everyone could be reached, messages were delivered and the support and participation of teachers was gained. In all villages both male and female teachers were popularly viewed as one of the most influential groups in the community. As such, during community campaigns they were always assigned specific tasks. In pursuit of further knowledge about the village, the project used PRA methods to gather information and communicate with community members.

Table 8.1: Criterion for Selection of 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 organizational skills	Availability of NGOs
Type of housing	Social activities

Source: Translated from the Project Reports

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. PRA techniques helped to gather information about communities' views and experiences with previous programs. During these sessions it was observed that the villagers were aware of their problems and explained the reasoning behind their past decisions. It was noted that they rejected some ideas, even if these were presented and encouraged by the project. Clearly, freedom of speech and people's ability to voice their opinions was integral to the social fabric of these societies; people usually organized meetings in an open forum and no rules and regulations prohibited anyone from attending assemblies or expressing his or her views.

During a PRA session in Dar El-Salam village, Bara that was conducted by the project to analyze people's experiences with the credit program, observations were made on the nature of interaction between the project staff and the community. The facilitators sometimes tried to guide the participants into accepting proposals, while others justified the low level of community participation in a micro-credit program and directed the participants to attest to their views. During the project's meeting in Bara, a senior officer enacted a PRA method to identify the reasons behind women's prohibition from participating in the formal credit program offered by the Agricultural Bank of Sudan. The project officer used a diagram to list the constraints on women's participation. As the session was initiated, she was met with silence, and people merely

looked at each other. The officer tried to encourage individuals to state their own opinions on what might prohibit women from participating. The participants then refuted the officer's views and attempted to convince her that she was wrong. It appeared that all the expectations of the PRA facilitator's expectations were misplaced and considered to be offensive by some participants. During the session a village leader suggested an alternative view:

'If you can forget about that diagram, let me tell you something. We will not let our mothers and wives go to the bank to be humiliated. The bank threatens people and throws them in jail and we do not accept that for our women. If you insist, we will go to borrow on their behalf. Between you and us (the community and the project), the money is their money, and they will be fully in charge of it, but in front of the bank the responsibility is ours (Joint community and project meeting, Bara / Field notes)

إذا كان يمكنك نسيان هذا الرسم التخطيطي فسأقول لك إننا لا يمكن أن ندع أمهاتنا وزوجاتنا يذهبن إلى البنك للإقراض ومن ثم يتعرضن للإذلال. البنك يهدد الناس ويرمي بهم إلى السجن ونحن لا نرضى ذلك للنساء، وإن كان لابد، فسوف نقترض نيابة عنهن، ولهن المال وإدارته (نقطة نظام من أحد الحضور)

Women contributed very little to discussions during joint PRA sessions, particularly when few or no educated women were present. During these meetings between the senior project staff, ABS investment officers, members of VDO committees and villagers in Bara, it was observed that women rarely talked, despite the fact that the sessions focused on their participation in the project's credit programs. Only a few elderly women, after they had been asked by the men to speak,

voiced their opinions or corrected misconceptions. During meetings, women revealed that they had been consulted about various programs, either through female members of VDOs or through their male relatives. Those who openly expressed their views explained that women were fully aware of all the issues related to the project or the community, regardless of whether they were directly involved. They also supported men's views about the banks' loans.

The project used PRA methods to accumulate baseline information about people's priorities, which were ultimately not taken into account when plans were designed. Instead, activities were implemented to analyze problems rather than to offer critical solutions. For example, access to drinking water was a major problem. The project offered to conduct studies on this issue rather than assist in improving the quantity and quality of drinking water. Another example was the provision and improvement of education services, which was identified as a secondary priority, to which the project responded by supporting an adult literacy program (Table 8.2). According to IFAD (2004:5) the information gathered through a health ranking technique was used neither to address the needs of the poorest categories of society nor to enhance their effective participation in the project activities. Research participants revealed that those identified as belonging to the poorest groups contribute much involvement. However, giving people the opportunity to present and analyze their problems created the impression that the development agency was pursuing a participation-oriented strategy which was dependent on people's needs, priorities and preferences. Using PRA methods to identify the problems encountered during the implementation of activities could also create a false image of the project's

approach. Onlookers might believe that the project genuinely employed a process approach that would allow room to accommodate on-going changes.

Table 8.2: People's Priorities in Comparison to Project Interventions Listed by PRA Participants

People's priorities	Project response
Access to drinking water	Support studies on water issues.
Access to formal education and/or improve the quality of education services	Support and supervise adult education program.
Access to health services.	Training health services providers and Midwives.
Provision of electricity and 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

As explained previously, the project made its assistance and interventions available through the self-help and gender

mainstreaming approaches. The following sections explore these approaches and demonstrate the interaction of local communities with them.

The Self-help Approach

The project design was based on a self-help approach whereby communities had to contribute resources, in cash or in kind, towards the cost of implementing community sub-projects such as the building of clinics and schools, nutrition classes for women, and the planting of enclosures (IFAD, 2004:34). The package of self-help measures focused on attaining efficiency and self-reliant communities. The project management believed that if the 'beneficiaries' were required to contribute to costs they might display more commitment and act in a more responsible and positive way (SPM-SSI, interview). The project reports indicated that when locals contributed to development costs, the activities could be expanded further.

The self-help approach highlighted community contributions and their gradual assumption of responsibility for village development. Through this approach, assistance was provided to those communities who agreed to the project's conditions. These conditions included the formation of development organizations, establishment of community centers, adoption of gender mainstreaming approaches and contribution of no less than 60% of the project cost (SPM-SSI, interview). This form of assistance has pursued a different strategy than that of aid agencies since 1984/5, which provided aid free of charge. Conflicts thus arose from the outcome of the project's new approach and communities' prior understandings of external assistance. The project's assets in terms of buildings, office facilities and cars, as well as the external

missions which previously visited villages, had given the impression that the project had a lot of resources. The following accounts reflect how the primary stakeholders viewed 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 that the project faced. In the beginning people resisted the new participatory concepts (for example, 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/ EI-Obeid).

الناس في هذه المناطق يعتقدون أن المشاريع التي تنفذها المنظمات عليها القيام بكل شيء، خاصة تلك المشاريع التي تدعمها المنظمات العالمية، وهم يرون أن تلك المنظمات يجب أن تدفع لهم وأن توفر كل شيء. كان ذلك أكبر التحديات التي واجهتنا، إذ رفضوا منهج الإعتماد على النفس. هذا وقد قضى كادر المشروع وقتاً طويلاً لإقناعهم بالمشاركة، وكانوا دائماً يذكرونا بطرق المشاريع السابقة وكيفية تعاملهم معهم

A village leader in Bara asserted:

‘The project had the resources: cars, staff and people of different colors who came to visit us. They told us to help ourselves. How can we help ourselves if we have nothing? The people are very poor, how can we help ourselves-we need resources and technical assistance’ (VL-FGD/ Bara2).

المشروع موارد كثيرة، سيارات ومعدات وناس اشكال
والوان، ولكنهم يطلبون منا ان نساعد أنفسنا. كيف نساعد أنفسنا ونحن
فقراء ؟ نحن نحتاج الموارد والدعم الفني .

Another participant added:

‘We have experience with many organizations. 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 named things after the organizations: IFAD project is the same, they did not consult us. We know what is better for us and we know how to do it (RP-FGD/ Bara).

اضاف مشارك آخر قائلاً: نحن لدينا تجربة مع كثير من المنظمات، إنها تأتي وتذهب، يفعلون أشياء صغيرة ، مثلاً: تدريب، توزيع مواد غذائية، وبناء مخازن لحفظ الحبوب في المكان غير المناسب، ويمكنك رؤية ذلك. الناس يسمون تلك الأماكن بأسماء المنظمات. نحن نعرف ما نريد ولكنهم لا يستشيروننا، ومشروع الإيفاد لا يختلف عن هذه المنظمات

These perspectives indicate that people had lost trust in development organizations and projects, which implied that what had been implemented by these organizations, had failed to contribute to their development. As explained in Chapter Seven, poverty amounted to more than 70% of the population in this area, which signals that the majority would not have been able to contribute in cash. The project’s evaluation mission reported that the communities were enthusiastic about contributing in kind towards implementing community projects but were largely unable to contribute in cash (IFAD, 2004:34). This shift in the delivery of development assistance through

self-help approaches therefore required novel understandings and interactions between the project and the communities.

Enforcing the 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 educational committee, women had their own social organizations.

Chapter Five demonstrated that, during the last two decades, development projects in Sudan employed the Women in Development approach (WID). Due to on-going debate and criticism of this approach, IFAD decided to adopt the alternative Gender and Development approach (GAD) in its projects. This perceived both men's and women's roles and responsibilities as part of a complementary framework. This particular project focused on involving women within the community network and not encouraging activities to be undertaken in isolation. Therefore, it insisted on establishing a mixed organization and having at least two female members in the committee. It was observed that when the project staff talked about women they used the term 'gender' to implicitly refer to women. This explains why people in the project area used the English term 'gender' and not the equivalent Arabic word when they spoke of women and women's participation, because for them the word 'gender' conveyed 'women.'

It became clear that women were specifically targeted by the project and positioned as central to its development

process. They were offered opportunities to voice their opinions and ideas on community affairs, and participate in planning and managing some activities. However, the questions which should have been initially posed are: are women willing to retain those opportunities? How do men feel about it? Does the newly created space generate any change in people's attitudes and standards of living? If any, what are the possibilities of its sustainability? Answering these questions may help to understand women's perspectives and their interaction with external development providers. They can also help to identify factors that might influence their participation in development projects.

According to a senior gender specialist (SGS-SSI, interview), the first meeting between the North Kordofan project and the villagers in *Bara I* was attended by men only. The *Sheikhs* in many villages informed the project staff that the men and women would not form a mixed committee. The project management developed a plan that included a comprehensive awareness program. This assigned female staff, particularly fieldworkers, to stay in the villages during these campaigns. After intensive awareness sessions in Dar El-Salam, the *Sheikh* and other leaders invited women to attend a general assembly and select two members to join the Village Development Organization. Subsequently, the two female committee members were given specific roles: one as the secretary and the other as the credit accountant. The project staff believed that this plan altered local attitudes to including women in mixed committees. Some research participants revealed that people began to accept the idea when they saw respected and educated women (female staff) travelling from towns, leaving their families in the process, to stay for days in

the villages. As a result, they gradually accepted the notion of incorporating men and women in a single committee.

Despite these efforts and positive outcomes, it appeared that this form of participation was not in the best interest of women, nor does it adequately address their concerns. The revelations below illustrate how both development actors, the project staff and the 'beneficiaries,' conceptualised this critical issue. The project's gender specialists believed that women should not be viewed as invisible resources and should be given a chance to present their views on the matters that concern them. A senior gender specialist described the project's ideology and plans regarding the issue of women's involvement:

'We were very strict 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 organizations. Therefore, when some villages refused these requirements we stopped our activities. In fact, the men have diverse knowledge and experiences through their interactions in these committees. Women will learn from them and build their capacities' (SGS-SSI/ El-Obeid).

لقد صممنا على إشراك إمرأتين في لجان التنمية التابعة للمشروع بالقرى، ولو تركنا هذا الأمر لأهل القرى فلن تجد النساء فرصة، وعندما رفضت بعض القرى جمدنا نشاطنا. الرجال لديهم الكثير من المعارف والتجارب ووجود النساء معهم يمكنهن من بناء قدراتهن

'The project wanted the women to become dependent on themselves by learning and taking loans from the banks. However, we knew that if we asked

them to come to 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/ Bara).

المشروع يهدف إلى تطوير المرأة ودفعها إلى الاعتماد على نفسها من خلال التعليم وأخذ القروض. كنا نعلم أنهم سيرفضون إذا طلبنا منهم الحضور إلى فصول محو الأمية، لذا أدخلنا فصول التغذية كحافز لتنفيذ برامجنا

These understandings shaped the project's activities aimed at generating changes within the communities. The staff's intention to empower women and open up opportunities for them within these societies was evident. However, this intention was constructed around the project's vision, rather than those of the people. The following statement represents a common perception noted 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 sustain their families. Lack of services and basic needs are our problems.' (FVDO-SSI/ Bara 1).

وجود النساء مع الرجال في ذات اللجنة ليس أمراً سيئاً ، وعدمه ليس مشكلة، إذ يمكننا أن نكون لجاناً من النساء لتنفيذ ما نريد. المشكلة ليست في نوع الجنس ولكنها تتمثل في إنعدام الخدمات وسوء الأحوال، مما دفع بالرجال إلى مغادرة القرية

Women were not anxious to participate in the same committees as men. They were satisfied with their own groups, which were primarily devoted to immediate problems of daily

survival, rather than philosophical conceptions of gender issues. However, enforcing certain approaches led some communities to respond in different ways. The villagers in *UmRuwaba 4* learned from other villages' experiences and resolved not to procrastinate. They informed the project's technical unit that they had prepared the house to be used as a community centre, and had selected two people from each grassroots organization to form Village Development Organization (VDO) committees. Female representatives were selected and a women's committee was formed. The VDO of *UmRuwaba 4* concentrated on requesting what could be readily provided by the project rather than what they actually needed. A member of the Village Development Organization explained this tactic:

'The project is concerned about gender issues and obviously cannot achieve 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 needed this revolving fund and the training and we decided to get it' (MM-FGD/ UmRuwaba 4).

المشروع يركز على قضايا الجندر. إنهم يفعلون ما جاؤوا من أجله وليس ما يريدونه الناس، ولهذا فقد طلبنا من النساء الحضور والمشاركة في برامج التدريب ، فنحن نحتاج إلى برامج التدريب وصندوق الدواء، فلماذا نضيع هذه الفرصة

The project, while underlining the inclusion of women, ignored the interests of the young men who are forced to migrate to urban centers to sustain their families. In fact, all of the young male participants of this research had returned from

the cities to perform farming work during the rainy season. They revealed that the project's outputs did not make any difference to their lives or encourage them to remain after the rainy season. A young male participant in *UmRuwaba 1* clarified this:

'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 finance a project, and even if it could, all the other supporting facilities do not exist: no electricity, no roads and no markets. (YMP-SSI/ UmRuwaba 1).

حلّمنا أن نجد وسائل تمكننا من كسب أفضل، لماذا نعود إلى القرى في فصل الخريف إن كان العمل في المدن أفضل؟ ما يوفره المشروع من دعم مادي ضعيف جداً ولا يمكننا من تنفيذ مشروع. المشكلة الأخرى هي إنعدام الخدمات الأساسية مثل الكهرباء والطرق والأسواق.

The implementation of participatory development requires establishing networks and relationships with related institutions and other development partners. The following section explores the project's role in linking local communities with external actors and how various partners interacted with each other.

Coordination and Networking

Coordination and established networks are crucial elements in implementing effective participatory development interventions. Clearly, several partners need to be involved. Despite the avocations for partnerships and establishing

networks, projects have largely continued to follow the model of conventional development practices (Richards, 2004). Some government institutions, such as an agricultural extension service and the Water Corporation, were involved in the North Kordofan project through several of their professionals, who provided services as private consultants for a period of time. In some cases, the project assumed the role of a contractor to ensure the flow of services to communities. For example, it covered expenses and coordinated with specialized state institutions, such as the Ministry of Health, to provide training for villages' service providers. Research participants viewed any activities implemented through individual contracts or by paying government agencies to provide services as a waste of resources and an unacceptable practice. A key director of the Ministry of Finance and Labor Force criticized this practice:

'The project established relationships with individuals through personal contacts. It hired individuals who are government employees to conduct the training programs and consultancies; this does not seem to be right' (KD-SSI/ El-Obeid).

قام المشروع باستخدام بعض أفراد الحكومة لتدريب المتدربين وتقديم وإعداد بعض الاستشارات الفنية، ولا يبدو ذلك مقبولاً

Another agricultural extension specialist at the MAAI in El-Obeid explained:

'The 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 doing so, it initiated bad practices and tensions between government staff' (AEX-SSI/ MAAI).

أوضح أخصائي الإرشاد الزراعي بالأبيض قائلاً: مشروع
إيفاد لم ينسق مع الآخرين. إنه يعمل بمفرده، علماً بأنهم يدفعون لبعض
موظفي الدولة أو لبعض الإدارات لإجراء التدريب، مما أدى إلى خلق
توتر بين تلك الإدارات وبين الموظفين

The specialized government institutions were not involved as accountable partners with obligations and responsibilities. As a result, local government institutions did not communicate with Village Development Organizations (VDOs). The failure to establish relations between public service providers and community organizations likely affected the outcomes of the project and the sustainability of VDOs. Cultivating relationships with individuals rather than specialized agencies created new practices that ran contrary to the notion of transparency and the philosophy behind self-help approaches. Moreover, the project's dominant role in coordinating activities deprived local organizations of the experience of developing networks and mutual relationships with formal services providers, the private sector and national and international NGOs.

Another example is the relationship between the project and the Arab Sudanese Seed Company. This company provides improved seeds and has a branch in the capital of North Kordofan State. The project organized the provision of improved seeds for certain agricultural crops, such as sorghum, millet, groundnut and guar. This was intended to improve crop productivity. The members of Village Development Organizations (VDOs) who participated in this research revealed that they had no awareness of these seed providers. The project instead communicated with the company on behalf of the communities and arranged with VDOs to cover the cost from the revolving fund.

The project's relationship with NGOs can be examined through its interaction with the Popular Development Works (PDW), the only national NGO operating on the project site. Chapter Seven examined the PDW's experiences in UmRuwaba locality. This section reflects on the interactions between the project and this NGO, to demonstrate how other development actors perceived the project. In some villages in UmRuwaba, the PDW had enacted programs and constructed community centers prior to the project's operation. In this way, locals in *UmRuwaba 4* informed the project staff that there was no need to create another centre as the project could use the existing one. The project management rejected the offer because they wanted to have their own sign displayed at the front of a centre, to make known the presence of this development agency in this area. As a member of the VDO recounted:

'When IFAD came we told them we already had a community centre which could be used for their activities. They said no. We had no other options; we needed assistance like other villages, and we had to do what they asked us to do' (MVDO-FGD/ UmRuwaba 4).

عندما جاءنا موظفو المشروع أخطرناهم بأنه لدينا مركز
إنشائه منظمة أعمال التنمية الشعبية، فرفضوا استخدامه وطلبوا منا
إنشاء مركز آخر ليضعوا اسمهم عليه، فما كان أمامنا إلا أن ننفذ .

A fieldworker in *UmRuwaba* locality described how the field staff perceived the project management's action:

'We were shocked when a manager aggressively refused to cooperate with PDW staff and prohibited the field team from making any contact or

organizing joint activities with them. We understood that he wanted to take credit for the achievements of the project instead of having partners who could share appreciation or acknowledgement of us. We all believed that this was a childish way of thinking, unfortunately, we could do nothing' (FW-SSI/*UmRuwaba*).

أوضح أحد موظفي المشروع بمحلية أم روابية رأي كبار موظفي المشروع في قضية التعامل مع المنظمة الوطنية "منظمة أعمال التنمية الشعبية" قائلاً: لقد صدمنا بقوة عندما قررت الإدارة عدم التعاون مع هذه المنظمة أو إجراء أي نشاط مشترك معها. فهمنا أن الإدارة تريد أن تستحوذ على أي إشادة أو تقدير يظهره المواطنون تجاه الأعمال التنموية. للأسف ليس لدينا القدرة على فعل أي شيء.

As explained earlier, there existed conflict between the project's field and senior staff. These contradicting views are without doubt related to the systems of planning and management as well as personal benefits and status. It is apparent that the project management and communities were guided by their own particular interests.

The development agency's concern regarding gender issues and dominant power relations resulted in the establishment of new community organizations. Their formation was intended to ensure the participation of those women who were not involved in the influential grassroots organizations (native administration, *El-Goodeya* council). A program manager at the NKRDP explained that the decision to form new organizations was made to create fresh and influential organizations that could helm the development process (SPM-SSI, interview). The following section introduces the village development organizations and explores people's attitudes to them.

Formation of New Organizations

For the NKRDP, the setting provided an opportune occasion to initiate a project where there were no existing discriminative or exclusive grassroots organizations, political parties or other divisive structures. Chapter Six illustrated how the existence of these types of organizations negatively influenced the outcomes of the White Nile Agricultural Services Project implemented between 1996 and 2001. Despite the significant diversity in socio-economic contexts between the societies of North Kordofan and the White Nile, the NKRDP chose to establish new organizations in order to replace existing grassroots organizations with more efficient ones. In fact, this decision was influenced by IFAD's previous experience in the White Nile State (WNS). In contrast to the WNS, the grassroots community organizations in North Kordofan State were united and trusted by locals, but were weakened on account of their limited capacity and resources. Rectifying this would have required a tremendous effort to generate shared knowledge, transfer skills, and facilitate access to resources. Simultaneously, the project encountered an opportunity to establish a participatory model, empower communities and endow the indigenous organizations with the capabilities to achieve the project's objectives and initiate their own development programs.

The project's newly created structures were called Village Development Organizations (VDOs). The VDOs were formed at village level through a general village assembly in which, depending on the size of the village, six to eleven members were elected to form the executive committee. According to the VDO's constitution, women had to constitute 30% of the committee members. Each committee consisted of a

chairperson, secretary, treasurer and treasurer's assistant, nomads' representative, village *Sheikh* and extension workers. Some of those members granted the extension worker positions led sub-committees, which variously dealt with agriculture, 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, to ensure that the process of selecting members and the president was democratic (SMN-SSI, interview). However, as indicated in Chapter Seven, local communities usually selected the members of grassroots organizations through consultation and negotiation, a procedure that protected internal solidarity. It was evident that in some villages the newly introduced 'democratic process' created tensions. In *UmRuwaba 4* the president of the village development organization revealed:

'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 of the 'project's committees' through consultation, we did not want to have the same sort of conflicts as other villages because of this voting procedure' (PVDO-FGD/ UmRuwaba 4).

تقدمنا برغبتنا للمشاركة في أنشطة المشروع، وعقدنا اجتماعات داخلية وحددنا من سيكون في عضوية المنظمة، فعلنا ذلك بالتشاور حتى نجنب أنفسنا الصراع الذي تسببت فيه الانتخابات بالقرى الأخرى .

The main objectives of the Village Development Organizations (VDOs) (IFAD, 2002a) were to:

- 2 Enhance the concept of solidarity, consultation and participation; motivate the community and local and national institutions to contribute to the establishment of social services, the protection of the environment and the development of natural resources;
- 3 Implement social and economic activities in order to improve the social and economic status of people at the village level;
- 4 Improve the productivity of crops and livestock;
- 5 Plan and implement capacity building programs through self-help and gender mainstreaming approaches;
- 6 Establish partnerships and seek support from the government and other development institutions; provide the members of VDOs with loans from the organization's resources or through facilitating bank loans; and
- 7 Coordinate the sustainable development efforts of different development agencies.

The VDO and its various committees were accountable to the general assembly. According to the VDOs' constitution, the village general assembly, composed of the registered members, must elect the board of directors and the heads of committees, and approve the annual plan, budget and report. The role 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 congregate the village assembly for general meetings.

The establishment of a new organization and committees was a crucial mechanism for the project. The project progressed further when it prepared a constitution and was able to have a registration act issued by the North Kordofan Government. In this regard, it was assumed that the organization would have the power to formally deal with local government institutions, which might guarantee its sustainability (KM-SSI/EI-Obeid). Local community leaders and grassroots organizations had no knowledge of the preparation of the VDOs' constitution until its final approval by the state government. Despite this, they did not reject the concept or the contents of this constitution. The concern here is instead that the preparation, follow-up and approval of such an organizational system that may affect lives should be the responsibility of those affected. This situation could have in fact become a learning process for those excluded. It could also have been an opportunity to communicate with government bureaucrats and establish relationships with related institutions. Because of these exclusive procedures, all the members of VDOs who I interviewed, except those who dealt with the credit program, had insufficient knowledge of the objectives of VDOs and the contents of their constitution.

Involving Women in the VDOs

The project utilized the adoption of these new village organizations as a strategy to confront power relations, as they contained both men and women. This situation was presented to the communities as a necessary condition for receiving assistance. Even so, the idea of involving women in committees with men created tension. Especially in the beginning, many communities rejected the formation of mixed organizations. Some villages even initially refused the project interventions

before deciding to re-join after they heard about the project's benefits from other communities.

Including women in the VDOs did not necessarily signify genuine change in people's attitudes to the composition of grassroots organizations. Furthermore, the formation of the VDOs did not always lead to the dissolution of the old organizations. Neither men nor women were convinced of the project's vision. They maintained their previous organizations, such as the educational committee, native administration and *El-Goodeya* council. They also continued to conduct collective activities using traditional methods. A village leader explained the community's response to the project's ideology:

'Having women in the Village Development Organization 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/ UmRuwaba 4).

إن وجود النساء مع الرجال في منطقة تنمية القرية ليس سيئاً، ونحن نعلم أن مشروع إيفاد يريد ذلك، أي مشاركة النساء. لقد ظلوا يحدثوننا كثيراً عن الجندر، الجندر، الجندر، ففهمنا أنهم يريدون أن نعمل معاً، نساءً ورجالاً. ليس هناك مشكلة في أن تعمل النساء مع الرجال ولكني قررت مرة أن أدعو الناس للنفير، ودعوت الرجال فقط فحضر لمساعدتي (34) أربعة وثلاثون رجلاً، وعملوا في مزرعتي لمدة ثلاث ساعات. وأنا لا أريد أن أدعو النساء لمساعدتي لأنني أحس

أننا يجب أن نساعدن بدلاً عن أن يساعدننا. والنساء المزارعات يفعلن نفس الشيء فهن يدعون أخواتهن النساء لمساعدتهن.

Despite these realities many research participants affirmed that the establishment of mixed organizations contributed to new understandings of women's roles and knowledge. It also influenced the nature of interactions between men and women. During a focus group discussion a female participant reflected upon her views:

'It was a dream to see the village centre and hear what men were saying during the committee meetings. Before the project we could not enter that centre, but afterwards we were able to enter, 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. Within our communities and households we have started to talk about different topics and men come and tell us what they have seen and how we can do things' (FP-FGD/ UmRuwaba 4).

كان حلمنا مشاهدة مركز للقرية وسماع ما يقوله الرجال أثناء الاجتماعات. قبل المشروع ما كان يمكننا ذلك، وبعد المشروع أصبح من الممكن المشاركة في الاجتماعات. الرجال لديهم الكثير من المعلومات، وذلك نتيجة للأسفار ومخالطة الغرياء. نحن النساء لدينا مشاغلنا. وعموماً فإن الأوضاع والمفاهيم قد تغيرت بعد المشروع.

Although the extent of women's participation varied between villages, it was observed that women from different categories of old and young, married and single began participating in public meetings and the project's committees. This was confirmed to be a new experience for women, which

was initiated by the project and encouraged by the presence of female staff. However, village leaders and men treated those women who had completed secondary school or university, or who worked as teachers in the villages, differently. Educated women exchanged information about the community with others, made community contributions by participating in events and encouraged other women to become involved in development programs. They also had a say on all internal household affairs, including on children's education, home construction and repairs, and the production and marketing of products.

Women's participation in committees has created new understandings and a greater appreciation of women's knowledge, yet it did not alter men's perspectives on gender roles and rights. The involvement of women in the project's committees and activities failed to challenge the traditional division of labor at household level. Because of this gender division of labor, which is particularly prevalent in rural areas, men will generally refuse to contribute to housework if women channel their efforts into participation in project activities. Although all male interviewees expressed no objections to women's participation in outdoor activities, they found it embarrassing to perform 'women's work' at home.

Who is Benefiting from the VDOs

Theoretically, participation is a means by which people can have an equal role in making decisions about the issues that affect them (Burke, 1968). However, the constitution of the Village Development Organizations (VDOs) clearly states that those who will benefit from the credit and the profits from VDO assets are the registered members. Other people may

benefit from other social services according to the conditions specified by VDO committees. These social services include training, literacy programs and services provided by fieldworkers, in the fields of midwifery, para-vet, pest management and health.

The VDO assets were audited annually. The share of the profits from micro-credit programs was 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 hidden services (IFAD, 2002a:2). Other undeclared benefits guaranteed to registered members only were participation in meetings and discussions and selection of community representatives. According to the constitution, the poorest groups, who could not afford to pay the membership fees and credit the first installment (the fees of the *Sandug*), had no right to attend meetings and nominate or be nominated for VDOs and their committees. This meant that the poorest were deprived of the opportunity to voice their opinions, select representatives of their own groups, or be selected. In *Bara 2*, the research participants considered this issue to be an oppressive and discriminative practice which had never before been experienced in their village. A research participant (RP-FGD, *Bara 2*) explained that the wealthy members of this village decided to cover the membership fees for the poorest households in order to maintain a position for them in the VDO committees.

The main concern here is the importance of adopting appropriate policies rather than expecting communities to respond accordingly in order to overcome the negative consequences of exclusive regulations. In fact, the issue of the exclusion of the poorest households from the VDOs and the

credit program was continuously raised by research participants, who expressed their anger and sympathy at seeing their fellow citizens openly informed that they could not take part in this program because of their poverty.

Evidently, there was genuine interest from the members of VDO committees in involving everyone in general meetings, whether or not they were members of the VDO. Although it was against the rules for those not registered as project participants to attend the project meetings, it was observed that when the project staff asked the VDO committees to assemble members for meetings, the committees tended to dispatch children to invite everyone. Even those who were not members of the VDOs were able to attend, by virtue of traditional right. Local communities used to organize their meetings in open public spaces, thus anyone who saw people gathering would merely turn up and join the group. In fact, it was the local people who spontaneously incorporated the project into indigenous community frameworks.

Sustainability of VDOs

With the assistance of the project, the VDOs were able to manage the credit program. Their members maintained records, collected proposals and communicated with the Agricultural Bank. The VDOs supervised the implementation of the activities proposed and supported by the project, such as the establishment of village nurseries, sand dune fixation, and the rehabilitation of rangeland and the support of service providers. However, the VDOs were unable to take over the responsibility for planning and seeking external support for such initiatives. During interviews and PRA sessions, members of VDOs could not identify any external partners with which

they might cooperate other than the Agricultural Bank of Sudan, whether private firms, government or international organizations.

The project staff claimed that they created new local organizations, whereas in reality they merely restructured the existing roles of various grassroots organizations. Recognizing this reality would enable us to understand the philosophy and operational systems of the project and the new organizations. For example, as outlined in Chapter Seven, the traditional community-based mechanism for conflict resolution is the local council of *El-Goodeya*. This council has conducted its activities for decades. In relation to the duties of *El-Goodeya*, the constitution of the VDOs suggests that 'the VDO at the village level will be responsible for conflict resolution' (IFAD, 2002a:4). However, these VDOs only represented those project participants who paid the fees and enrolled as members, which implies that those who were not members would not be governed by the new system. Meanwhile, the constitution did not specify whether the VDO would only handle conflicts occurring between members, or deal with the community as a whole. Neither did it detail the correct procedures in the case of conflicts between project participants and non-participants. However, due to the following reasons, the locals remained attached to *El-Goodeya* council and committed to its rules: 1) as demonstrated in Chapter Seven, the council's members were the most respected and trusted members of the community, and were selected on the basis of these qualities; 2) it represented all the community and excluded none; 3) the research participants who were registered as project participants indicated that they were not comfortable with the new organization because of its exclusivity. The creation of new

structures conditioned the type of participation by members, as many did not feel they belonged to it (Lane, 1995). Surprisingly, when 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 organizations to deal with this issue. None referred to the VDOs or their committees.

The large number of committees, the existence of both men and women in the same organization and the unfamiliar election procedure could pose a risk to the sustainability of this structure. In these communities people prefer to adopt consultation in selecting the executive members of grassroots associations, rather than the procedures of nomination and election. Furthermore, the new VDOs were given few responsibilities and limited decision-making authority. The members of VDOs were not permitted to participate in the project's internal meetings, monitoring and evaluation, or receive feedback from evaluation reports and findings. IFAD's mission (IFAD, 2004:7) reported that the participatory monitoring of the project activities was not made a priority by the monitoring and evaluation officers.

It was perhaps assumed that these VDOs would collapse after the withdrawal of the project and that people would continue to 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 organizations and the Native Administration on how they should handle the informal credit (revolving fund) after the

project stopped. Especially in the villages where there are two *Sheikhs*' (SMO-SI/ El-Obeid).

لضمان إستمرارية أنشطة المشروع وتجنب المظاهر السالبة كان لابد من التفاوض مع المنظمات الشعبية والإدارة الأهلية، وذلك لضمان إستمرار وإدارة الصندوق الدوار. هذا الأمر مهم جداً، خاصة في القرى التي بها شيخين .

For the time being, local communities accorded a separate identity to the products of external interventions, by distinguishing the project's committees and activities from their own. This demarcation created a new identity, which was associated with and named for the project. A question that was raised was that if the project staff and assistance were not in existence, 'would its 'committees' and 'ideologies' exist?' A senior project officer responded to this question:

'The committees have a lot of responsibilities and should play an important role in developing the local communities. In reality, they end by registering loans and when this stops all these committees will disappear, especially the women's committee.' (SPO-SI/ Bara).

اللجان التي كونها المشروع كان من المفترض أن تقوم بكثير من المهام، وفي نهاية المطاف أصبحت تقوم بإدارة القروض ولا شيء غير ذلك. كل هذه اللجان وخاصة لجنة المرأة من المتوقع أن تتوقف تماماً بعد نهاية المشروع .

The project's management and staff believed that by maintaining an informed and registered organization, people would be able to communicate directly with local authorities. It was assumed that government agencies would be more responsive if they became aware of the representative power and rights of these VDOs. However, the crucial elements

required for this to occur are the knowledge and capacity of the members and their ability to communicate, interact and negotiate with outsiders. Obviously, the locals lack these capacities and failed to develop them while working with the project. Meanwhile, the approved constitution remains only theoretical on paper, and may be forgotten after the project's withdrawal if it is not reviewed, assessed and enhanced through practical action.

Having examined the role and potential of Village Development Organizations, the following section outlines the project's interventions and people's perceptions of them.

Interventions and Outcomes

The project's organizational and operational structures were designed to ensure that management had independent jurisdiction over day-to-day operation and the freedom to amend its plan of action. Such amendments should be made to ensure a decisive impact and consistent progress in implementation (IFAD, 2004:34). The midterm review mission criticised project management for not applying the project reports to immediate corrective actions, but rather using them as documentation (IFAD, 2004:7). Theoretically, the project management had limited patience for adopting a process approach. 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 program, training of service providers and some technical services. The project's budget is limited and

supposed to cover hundreds of villages. We end up doing small things that touch upon 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/UmRuwaba).

تقدم سكان القرى بعدد من من الطلبات للمشروع، ونسبة لمحدودية ميزانية المشروع فقد فشلنا في الإستجابة لطلباتهم الخاصة بتحسين أو توفير الخدمات التعليمية والصحية، وانتهى بنا الأمر إلى تنفيذ برنامج تدريبي لتعليم الكبار، الخدمات الصحية البسيطة، تأهيل القابلات. المواطنون غير سعداء بأداء المشروع، طلباتهم واحتياجاتهم أكبر من إمكانية المشروع .

The project's interventions were constructed according to the self-help approach. The majority of the 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 programs 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 targeted villages. This section delineates people's responses to and opinions of micro-credit programs, farmers' demonstration plots and training activities.

Micro-Credit Program

The micro-credit program was divided into the sections of informal credit (village revolving fund) and formal credit (loans from the bank). It was partially funded by the project and applied under the conditions outlined below.

Informal Credit

The informal credit program adopted what was locally called *Sandug* (revolving fund). Community members who expressed interest in benefiting from informal credit were asked to join the Village Development Organization, which would be formalized by paying a membership fee (SDD 500) and the *Sandug* fees (SDD 2,500). The project placed no restriction on the number of members per household; numerous individuals within each could be members and borrow at the same time. The *Sandug*'s members could borrow up to SDD 25,000 (equivalent to US\$ 100) and had to repay within six months of borrowing before applying for a new loan.

At village level, the informal credit program was managed by the project's credit officers and credit committee members. The credit committee members were responsible for maintaining accounts and records; therefore, there was a tendency to encourage the selection of literate community members for the village committees. The project trained some members of the credit committee on the management of micro-credit. However, it was noted that the credit officers spent much of their time assisting the committee members to record and update records.

The functions of the credit committee were to identify which of the potential borrowers had viable proposals, offer group guarantees and establish a mechanism for pursuing loan repayments on schedule. The concept of a group guarantee entailed that each group was expected to cover the cost of defaults or repayment delays by individual members. The group was responsible for ensuring that repayments were made, as all members would not be permitted access to further credit until the problem was solved.

No records concerning the socio-economic and environmental impact of these loans were available, except what has been revealed by individual research participants based on personal or second-hand experiences. Interview responses revealed that participation in a micro-credit program enhanced the economic prosperity of some participants. Female participants of micro-credit reported that the revolving fund enabled them to purchase and rear goats, process food, and buy and sell some products.

‘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 of the Village Development Organization. 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/ Bara 2).

انا أرملة ولدى سبعة أطفال ولا أملك المال الكافي لدفع رسوم العضوية لجمعية التنمية التابعة للمشروع. أحد الموظفين دفع نيابة عني، وبالرغم من ذلك لم أستفد لأنني لم أتمكن من دفع رسوم الصندوق الدوار، ومن الواضح أن التمويل الأصغر ليس أمثالنا .

Another woman, through a focus group discussion, elaborated on this theme:

‘Four of us: myself, my husband and two sons, are members of 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/ Bara 2).

أنا وزوجي وإثنين من أبنائي أصبحنا أعضاء في منظمة التنمية، أخذنا القروض لشراء ثمانية من الماعز، بعد فترة قمنا ببيع بعضها لتسديد الديون. الآن لدينا خمسة ماعز وجميعها ملكنا. إننا نعرف الكثير من الفقراء الذين لم يحصلوا على قروض. كان يجب على المشروع إيجاد وسيلة لمساعدتهم.

In communities in which skilled workers reside, people took the initiative to utilize informal credit to improve the living conditions of the poor. For example, in *UmRuwaba 4* the poor families would typically abandon their own land or a portion of it to work for the wealthy, in order to meet their daily needs. The VDO in *UmRuwaba 4* introduced a new way of utilizing the informal credit fund; it provided poor households who had joined the *Sanduuq* with loans for food, to encourage them to cultivate their farms before considering undertaking labor for the rich. A member of the VDO (MVDO-FGD, *UmRuwaba 4*) confirmed that adopting this approach created a labor shortage in the village and increased the employment rate, which benefited those who finished their own work early and were able to work for others. Households which did not require food for work chose to buy gas stoves with the credit. During a focus group discussion, the female participants identified the following benefits of using gas for cooking instead of traditional wood stoves: it is clean, fast and reduced cooking time by about three hours (FP-FGD/ *UmRuwaba 4*). Their positive experiences with gas stoves encouraged others to approach the Village Development Organization (VDO) and apply for loans. Experiences in Dar El-Salam, where some paid

the membership fees of others and which were exposed to new innovations made by the VDO in *UmRuwaba 4*, indicated that people could cooperate and take up initiatives when granted information and resources.

The wealthier groups in different communities responded that they did not consider that those who joined the project's credit program had progressed into a higher wealth category. They explained that there was no clear change in people's wealth as a result of the credit program. They strongly believed that possessing two goats or sheep or borrowing SDD 20,000 would never engender real change in lives. The focus group participants justified their responses by explaining that the loans borrowed by poor and middle class families was small, and if two or three members of a household decided to borrow, they then had to repay this in larger installments. In general, the way informal credit was utilized was based on a household's interests and needs. For example, the collection of wood for fuel was the women's responsibility, yet 63% of those who used the loans to buy gas and kerosene stoves were male (IFAD, 2004).

Formal Credit

The formal credit program was implemented through the ABS. The bank required applicants to possess the following in order to receive financial credit: 1) knowledge and experience of proposed project activities; 2) a union or Social Fund guarantee; 3) a residential certificate from the popular committee; 4) an opened account with the bank; and 5) a final signed contract.

The bank's investment officers, who received incentives from IFAD, prepared the feasibility studies for proposed

projects, while the Agricultural Bank of Sudan dealt with loan defaulters. During the period of fieldwork, two members of the VDO (*Bara 1*) were imprisoned due to their failure to repay loans (MVPC-FGD/ *Bara 1*). This created ill-feeling toward the banks, particularly from women, in these communities, being presented in front of a formal court or sent to jail does not seem appropriate and is perceived as completely unacceptable for women.

Those who benefited from the formal micro-credit provided by bank loans were relatively wealthy and most had had previous dealings with the banks. As a well-off participant in *Dar El-Salam* detailed,

‘I have an account with another bank but I benefit from the facilities offered by the project (group guarantee). In this village, six people borrowed from the Agricultural Bank. All of them are rich. You know! It is an opportunity and we have to make use of it’ (RRP-FGD).

لدى حساب مع أحد البنوك ولقد استفدت من فرصة القروض التي أتاحتها المشروع. معي ستة أشخاص من هذه القرية كلهم من الأغنياء، وقد استفادوا من برنامج التمويل. تعرفين أنها فرصة ولا بد أن نستفيد منها .

Another ABS borrower in *Bara 1* indicated that his and other wealthy households in the village benefited from what was offered by the Agricultural Bank of Sudan (ABS), and borrowed SDD 200,000 (approximately US\$ 1000) each. This type of case was common to all communities interviewed. Almost all the wealthy participants of this study expressed that they had benefited from the formal credit.

The interviewees representing the ABS explained that the bank's main interest was to have the money returned and to ensure that borrowers pursue viable projects and are able to deposit specified amounts after opening an account with the bank. Poor and middle class groups could not approach the ABS because they lacked the skills to deal with the bank's procedures and conditions, or were wary of the risks involved. As argued by Remenyi (1991), risk-taking is an issue for the poor, as the consequences of failure can be disastrous for the survival of their businesses and families.

Even in the case of informal credit, the payment of *Sandug* fees and the conditions of repayment were always a problem for the poorest families. This was noted by both the project's evaluation mission (IFAD, 2004:30) and the research participants as a constraint that hindered many poor people from benefiting from the revolving fund. However, in *UmRuwaba 4* a group of rich households resolved to pay the VDO and *Sandug* fees for others, and offered to grant their turn for *Sandug* loans to the poorest households. A member of a poor household asserted:

'Yes, they paid the membership and *Sandug* fees for us but the repayments start before you benefit from the loan. Other people have some other savings to pay for it while they are waiting, but me, what am I going to do?' (PFP-SSI/ UmRuwaba 4).

لقد دفع لنا بعض الأشخاص رسوم العضوية في المنظمة
ورسوم الصندوق، ولكننا لم نستفد من برنامج التمويل لأن الدفعة
الأولى يأتي ميعادها قبل الاستفادة من القرض .

The likelihood of the poor's ability to save and begin repayments prior to benefiting from the initial investment was

almost impossible. The borrowers knew from the outset that the repayment would be made out of resources other than this investment. Some participants resold one sheep or goat to repay the loan.

The resources provided by the project were insufficient to mobilize members of communities or reduce male urban-migration. When the project participants discovered that there were no more resources to receive and yet their main problems persisted, they began to express frustration. Some openly communicated their reluctance and lack of interest towards hosting the project in their village. For them, the project's meetings were non-productive and a waste of time.

Further project interventions of demonstration plots and the literacy program are examined below.

Farmers' Demonstration Plots

The project introduced demonstration plots to introduce farmers to new techniques. The criteria for selecting participants were: willingness to participate and apply the extension packages recommended by technical staff; demonstration plots should be made accessible; and participant farmers should comply with the repayment procedure and allow visitors on his or her farm. This activity invited those who showed interest and who accepted the conditions outlined above. The project called these participants 'model farmers.' Those model farmers came from the wealthy, or were landowners who could afford to offer a plot of land for such a trial. Apparently those of the poor who could not afford to cover the costs of improved seeds and land preparation would not participate.

As part of its intervention, the project offered a range of training programs that addressed the various fields of adult literacy, nutrition, food processing, children's health, sanitation and hygiene. Some literate members of the communities benefited from the training opportunities by providing services such as midwifery and other health services. The role of this group was appreciated by villagers and has benefited whole communities, yet people must still travel to the cities for advanced medical services.

The Literacy Program

The adult literacy program aimed to teach participants literacy and numeracy. It contained educational material concerning morals, values, family and communities' rights and obligations. This program was implemented under the supervision of the Directorate of Adult Education. It utilized the free services offered by new university graduates who had to spend two years working for free before entering the workforce. The project provided the teaching materials, motivated the communities and paid incentives to the instructors. The literacy course lasted for six months and was offered six days a week for two hours daily. In each village, two women were given advanced training and selected as volunteers to sustain the program after its initial first-year run. The literacy program could not be organized during the rainy season because no one was prepared to sacrifice his or her farm work to attend the course, while most men were prevented from attending the course during the off-season, as they were often occupied outside the villages. The attendance rate varied between villages and gender. The rate was very high among women; 95% of those who attended the program were women. As indicated in Chapter Seven, men usually leave the villages

after the harvest in order to seek jobs in the cities. However, even many of the men who remained did not join the literacy program. Some were preoccupied with their work, while some refused to join a literacy class where the teachers were women.

The female credit participants appreciated the literacy program, which enabled them to apply for loans, fill in forms, and sign contracts. Research participants acknowledged that the information received during the course had a significant social impact. A female member of the Village Popular Committee in *Bara 1* conformed to this view:

‘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 our husbands’ (FVPC-SSI/ Bara 1).

لقد تعلمنا القراءة والكتابة وتوقيع العقود. لقد عرفنا حقوقنا وواجباتنا، خاصة فيما يتعلق بأسرنا، جيراننا وبقية أفراد المجتمع. لدينا الآن مواضيع كثيرة نتحدث عنها، وبعضنا استطعن أن يقمن علاقات أفضل مع أزواجهن.

Some children, primarily those that had dropped out of primary school, were targeted by the literacy program in the hope of persuading them to resume a formal education. The literacy program was terminated after the first group graduated. This was due to the fact that the two female literacy teachers, who had been offered further training in order to sustain the program, lacked confidence and revealed that some did not trust them and refused to attend their classes. A member of VPC in *Bara 1* confirmed:

'After the first training course the project chose two young women and offered them further training. It was assumed that those two women would volunteer and continue teaching the others. People did not believe they could teach; men completely refused to be taught by women' (MVPC-FGD/ Bara 1).

بعد إقامة الدورة التدريبية الأولى يختار المشروع إثنين من الشابات ويقدم لهن مزيداً من التدريب ليصبحن مدرّبات. المشكلة أن أهل القرية وخاصة الرجال ليس لديهم الثقة في كفاءة هؤلاء النساء .

In addition to micro-credit, demonstration plots and training programs, the project offered opportunities for each administrative unit to select a project which would serve 20 to 25 villages. This could include the rehabilitation of a school or hospital, the cost of which could not exceed three million Sudanese Dinar. The project contributed 60% of the cost while the communities were asked to cover the remainder. For example, in *Wadashana'a* city, the project collaborated with local government authorities and community organizations to renovate the main hospital and the girls' secondary school. The project built two classrooms in the school and purchased a new electric generator, while the hospital received full maintenance of their electric power and water network.

As a participant observer, I was able to make notes of some concerns associated with these interventions. These concerns were related to the technical capabilities of staff, people's priorities, sustainability and the project's reporting system. The following section specifies these issues.

General Concerns

Professionals' Technical Skills

The micro-credit program focused on providing loans and making investments. Meanwhile, several critical aspects were not carefully considered, such as types of investment. This indicates that the program was not accompanied by technical assistance, which could have opened opportunities for additional income-generating activities. Credit recipients thus depended on their existing knowledge and skills in utilizing loans. Few participants engaged in food processing, while the majority chose reliable investments familiar to them, primarily the raising of livestock. However, rearing livestock in marginalized arid zones was not free from risk. The difficulty of storing fodder for dry seasons posed the threat of feed shortages, especially when two subsequent poor rainy seasons were encountered.

Development projects must be aware of the possible side effects of their interventions. For example, increasing livestock density, specifically that of goats, in marginalized land prone to desertification and desert encroachment is not recommended. A project specialist expressed his concerns with this issue:

'This credit program focuses on encouraging women to buy goats because they are cheap and do not need special fodder or herdspersons to look after them. In fact, goats are very dangerous in environments like North Kordofan. We are suffering from desertification and we need a tremendous effort to regain the lost vegetation cover. We made our point about this credit trend but the credit program's

officers and gender specialists wanted to make achievements; therefore we failed to stop it' (NRS-SSI/ UmRuwaba).

يشجع برنامج الإلتمان النساء على شراء الماعز لأنها رخيصة ولا تحتاج إلى علف. المشكلة هي أن هذه الحيوانات خطيرة جداً على البيئة الهشة في شمال كردفان. نحن نعاني من التصحر ونحتاج جهود هائلة لإستعادة الغطاء النباتي المفقود. ذكرنا تحفظاتنا ولكن لا أحد يستمع إلينا

It was observed that all demonstration plots we inspected during fieldwork had adopted the agro-forestry system. Some of them planted exotic trees such as *Neem*, which meant that the landowners had to utilize the land for a long period of time, and that after two or three years the land would still be unusable for planting other crops. Employing the agro-forestry system in the semi-arid zone of North Kordofan is a recommended strategy for restoring the deteriorated environment and combating desertification. The villagers in the project area were well aware of the advantages of planting trees, especially following their experiences with drought and famine. Many research participants confessed that they had bought and planted the *Acacia senegalensis* (gum Arabic/*Hashab* tree) seeds. A male farmer described this process:

'It was almost fifteen years ago when I removed the *Hashab* trees from about 60 hectares and sold them in the market. At that time, I wanted to have a lot of money at once. That was an act which I still regret very much. The production of gum Arabic is a sustainable source of income, especially when the rain is not enough to produce 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 my own experience' (MFR-FGD/UmRuwaba 3).

قبل خمسة عشر عاماً قمت بإزالة اشجار الهشاب عن مساحة (60) ستين هكتاراً وقمت ببيعها في السوق. كنت حينها أفكر في كسب مبلغ كبير من المال. إن زراعة أشجار الهشاب مفيدة وهي مصدر دائم للدخل ومخصص للتربة، إضافة إلى أننا يمكن أن نزرع تحتها، وهي مفيدة جداً خاصة عندما لا يكون الخريف جيداً. في السنة الماضية إشتريت بذور الهشاب وزرعتها من غير أن يحدثني أحد، لقد تعلمت من التجربة.

This suggests that many native species with multi-purpose benefits are appropriate to this fragile environment. What is required from this point is to share technical knowledge with local communities.

The following conversation records part of the project's meeting with the local communities in *Bara 2*. The project's staff arrived seven hours late and the men subsequently refused to call the women to attend the meeting after the latter had waited so long. However, my presence as a researcher and a visitor relieved the tension. A group of twelve men agreed to discuss some issues with the project's staff and tell me about their experiences. The village leader openly informed the staff that they were not interested in wasting their time with IFAD insofar as the organization 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 issues related to the supply of improved seed and fodder. The villagers refused to accept the improved fodder which the project had brought. The project assumed that this fodder would save animals' lives, and

expected that the owners of livestock would pay the cost. However, that occurred in early August when the land was abundant with green grass. The conversation proceeded as follows:

Project officer: What do you think about the new improved groundnut 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: OK. That is fine but now we have brought a stock of fodder to be sold to those who need it.

VDO Chairperson: The animals are now 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 did you not bring it three months ago?

(Project Meeting, Bara 2/ Field notes)

Another example which demonstrated the nature of interactions between the project and the Village Development Organization (VDO) took place in *UmRuwaba 1*. After a focus group discussion, a fieldworker requested that the members of the VDO show us the village nursery and community woodlot. The nursery was established in the backyard of a fenced well to facilitate the protection and watering of the seedlings. The responsibility for running it was left to a single VDO member. When we visited the nursery the supervisor informed us that all the seedlings had died and nothing was left. As he revealed, '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, UmRuwaba).

The above example displays similarities with the WNASP in the White Nile State. The collapse of village and school nurseries in that project's sites occurred after the withdrawal of the project. However, this particular incident in UmRuwaba was not made known to the project or even all the committee members. This raises a question about the Village Development Organization's commitment and capacity to plan and supervise such community affairs. It also exposes the necessity of the project's approach and staff's capability to follow up and aid committees to develop workable plans. Clearly, it is dangerous and unwise to introduce new activities without a clear vision of how they will operate. In fact, the local communities had experience with various on-going activities that were planned, implemented and sustained by local grassroots organizations. These activities, which entailed the construction and maintenance of schools, mosques and community centers, as well as the organization of group weddings and childcare services, were initiated by committed individuals or groups. This implies that within communities, there are many individuals and groups willing to run and manage community programs. However, the question remains: who are the right people to carry out certain tasks? It should have been the responsibility of the Village Development Organization and the project to identify how such activities were to be implemented.

Priorities and Sustainability: Everyone's Concern

The project's approaches were designed and approved by the funding agencies. When locals were asked to identify their priorities in order, they listed drinking water, followed by health and education services. The project initiated its pre-planned activities: literacy programs and the training of some community members to work as field workers. A senior program manager (SPM-SSI, NKS) blamed the government for not designing a project that responded appropriately to local needs. A former project officer (FPO-SSI, El-Obeid/NKS) revealed that people in North Kordofan termed the project activities 'cartoon activities,' which refers to small, scattered activities that do not genuinely solve problems. In fact, the sustainability of the interventions is quite questionable and cannot be guaranteed. The most important achievements of the project were the training of service providers, of which approximately one was accomplished per village. The continuation of their services cannot be assured; some, particularly the men, had already abandoned the job because financially, it was not worth staying in the village. Some female providers migrated with their families to other villages or cities.

90% of the project's technical and field staff who took part in the structured interviews revealed their expectation that the main development interventions, such as the credit program, women committees' and development organizations would gradually collapse or immediately cease. All hypothesized that the female service providers would continue as long as they lived in the village, while male service providers might not remain if they found better opportunities elsewhere.

Reporting and Assessment

The outcomes of interventions were a concern for the project management. The availability of indicators assisted the project in determining and measuring its quantitative achievements, which were significant to function as evidence for development agencies, especially IFAD (SMN-SSI, interview). On the other hand, the communities themselves may not have perceived these indicators or outcomes as valuable.

During fieldwork, it was noted that the project staff never made records of villagers' concerns or complaints, which included such important issues as staff responsiveness, failures to respond within an appropriate time period and the collapse of some activities. Furthermore, none of the project reports showed the relevance of various interventions and their impact on participants' lives.

The project documents and the staff's verbal rhetoric and responses to interviews illustrated that the concept of participation was perceived as a central element in the overall development process. However, in practice participation was considered solely during the stages of implementation and local contribution of resources. It seems that the people, who were the targeted groups, had little say on what was planned, delivered and implemented by the project. The project's primary participants had only a limited or non-existent contribution to decision-making, monitoring and evaluation processes. They also possessed limited citizen's rights and lacked the skills to collaborate with outsiders. The project played the dominant role in most processes, such as in leading negotiations about training, the budget, awareness campaigns, credit, cost-recovery and women's roles.

Having explored the project's interventions and other issues related to the technical capabilities of the staff, sustainability and reporting systems, the following section briefly outlines the factors which influenced the extent of popular participation.

Factors Influencing Participation

There were many factors that have influenced the quantity and quality of people's participation in the project. Some can be attributed to the project, while others were related to the influence of government and local communities. In summary, the fact that the project and the Agricultural Bank of Sudan instituted many restrictions resulted in the exclusion of the poorest categories from participating in the micro-credit program. Meanwhile, restrictions also determined the extent of participation among the wealthy and middle class categories. The outcome of the interventions was constrained by the fact that those who benefited the most were the 'well-off,' followed by middle-income earners, and then the poor. Regarding both formal and informal micro-credit programs the poorest gained almost no advantages. The poorest groups had inadequate resources to participate in 'self-help' programs and possessed insufficient land and inputs to adopt the new farming techniques.

Despite its claim to adopt a participatory approach, in practice the project enacted a conventional system that once again restricted popular participation in planning, monitoring, evaluation and decision-making processes. Pressures of time and disbursement, as well as the failure of the staff to communicate with each other and share knowledge with local communities, inflicted a negative effect on the realization of

development and the project's reputation. Furthermore, government agencies were not fully involved in supporting local communities and building their capabilities. Meanwhile, communities also lacked the skills and information necessary to communicate with outsiders and build mutual relationships.

Summary

This chapter examined the approaches, impacts and outcomes of the North Kordofan project. Its interventions were underlined by self-help and gender mainstreaming approaches. Assistance was provided in the form of micro-credit, training and awareness programs. The project design emphasized its commitment to fostering local capacities, building networks and serving the poor. However, often more well-off villages benefited from selection while the poorest were excluded. The project's philosophy was based on creating a self-reliant community, thus requiring that some achievements be made towards empowerment. In practice, it was concerned with promoting efficiency rather than building locals' capacities or helping them to establish links and relationships with the private sector and international development providers.

The project used PRA methods to identify people's needs and priorities. However, the findings of these processes were not taken into account when plans were designed. This chapter has highlighted how the project enforced its own ideology, despite objection from local communities concerning the establishment of new mixed organizations with new regulations. The chapter has explained how the project exercised its oppressive power when it decided to withdraw from the villages that rejected its particular participatory mechanisms. It has also revealed that the newly created

organizations were not necessarily more inclusive; rather, they excluded the neediest sectors of the community.

The North Kordofan Rural Project played the primary role in planning and management processes. It did not involve the members of the new organizations in planning and decision-making, nor did it continue to consult them regarding on-going interventions. This suggests that the outcomes of these processes cannot be seen as transformative, as the communities had no involvement in decision-making and external networks, and their needs and priorities were not fully addressed.

By imposing its own ideology and hiring female staff, the project succeeded in involving women in the new committees and micro-credit and training programs. Literacy programs raised women's awareness and improved the skills used in performing their traditional responsibilities. Moreover, involving women in the committees changed men's attitudes towards female knowledge and capabilities. However, it did not change the traditional norms regarding gendered divisions of labor. Furthermore, despite the project's employment of a Gender and Development approach, it failed to equally address young men's concerns.

This case study has revealed that not all of those classified as 'powerful' cling to power, as the literature suggests. Within these communities, some rich and influential individuals were inspired to perform good deeds and voluntarily undertook to spare time and energy for their community's development.

This chapter highlighted that the extent and quality of people's participation was influenced by the policies,

credibility and staff behavior of development providers, as well as the Agricultural Bank of Sudan's borrowing conditions and individual communities' values, skills and financial capabilities.

The following chapter discusses the main themes emerging from both case studies and proposes measures for enhancing the outcomes of participatory development projects in Sudan.

Reflections on Participatory Development Practices

Introduction

The previous three chapters have provided an outline of the White Nile Agricultural Services Project (WNASP) and the North Kordofan Rural Development Project (NKRDP), both of which were implemented by the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) and the Government of the Sudan. The WNASP functioned as a secondary case study, considering that the project was phased out in 2001 and many of its development actors were no longer present in the field. This case provided an opportunity to explore the perspectives of the villagers and other key local informants after the withdrawal of the project's staff and assets. It demonstrated how local communities responded to the new concepts introduced by the project, such as micro-credit programs, the delivery of loans and women's involvement. On the other hand, the NKRDP was used as the major case study, as fortunately all the required units of analysis were present at the time of fieldwork, most importantly, the project staff and its formal partners. These conditions contributed to the analysis of the nature and potential of the project's interventions in greater depth. In this major case study, the indigenous participatory values, structures and practices were identified in order to conceptualize the relationship between the project and local systems.

The projects were implemented in two different socio-economic settings. Both projects delivered their assistance through the channel of micro-finance, aiming to create self-

reliant communities. The projects employed various development approaches to encourage people's participation, their design being guided by the concept of participation as a means as well as an end. By adopting both concepts, the development providers intended to achieve efficiency, effectiveness, sustainability and empowerment.

This chapter discusses the central themes arising from previous chapters, including: the policies and credibility of development providers, professionals' behaviour, power relations, the formation of community organizations, gender issues and indigenous values and practices. These themes offered a platform from which to theorise the nature and potential of participatory development interventions and the factors that have influenced their outcomes. This chapter suggests possible improvements to be made to the practice of participatory development in Sudan.

Policies and Credibility of Development Providers

Development providers shape development processes through their policies and professional staff. This section examines their contributions.

Government Role

Decentralization has been adopted in Sudan since 1970, and yet the administrative systems are still highly centralized. The research participants at the local levels in both North Kordofan and the White Nile states repeatedly affirmed that federal and state governments governed according to and served the capital and only subsisted on central authority. Furthermore, government officials were perceived as only serving themselves and their own interest groups. However,

developing transformative participatory local governance requires a strong central state capacity, a well-developed civil society and an organized political force with a strong capacity for social mobilization (Hellers, 2001).

The government's Comprehensive Development Strategy (CDS) (1992-2002) and 'Triple Program for Economic and Institutional Salvation' (TPEIS) indicated that the government's philosophy conformed to the principles of Liberalization and the free market economy, which were conceived to initiate economic growth and development (Government of the Sudan, 1997:81). The CDS and TPEIS encouraged grassroots participation in order to generate social equilibrium and protect weaker groups from the negative effects of free market policies. The CDS provided the foundation for the strategies later adopted by development projects, particularly those implemented by multilateral development agencies. Accordingly, the federal government, together with the state governments, negotiated and accepted loan-based assistance from IFAD in the implementation of the WNASP and the NKRDP.

The projects provided an opportunity for the government and implementing agency to engage in a partnership that promoted their shared ideologies. The government required international support to implement its new development strategy. However, IFAD tended to offer assistance in the form of loans made available only under certain conditions, such as the contribution of 'beneficiaries' and other partners (governments and local banks). The WNASP and NKRDP documents distinctly referred to IFAD's particular inputs and approaches which aimed to support the government's efforts to promote privatization and

decentralization. It was assumed that this would lead to empowerment at grassroots levels, as it would force people to assume responsibility for their own development (IFAD, 2002b:2; IFAD, 2004:12/37). The relationship between both projects and the government was guided by political and economic themes. The development agency's involvement in programs supporting decentralization and privatization indicated they accepted their implication in the political agenda that encouraged community participation in market-led development (Hulme and Edwards, 1997). The new agenda focused on the withdrawal of the state by supporting participatory governance (Schneider, 1999). Therefore, the WNASP and NKRDP put effort into micro-finance and the empowerment of grassroots organizations through collaboration with state institutions.

By employing the self-help approach, the project interventions attempted to bridge the gap between the priorities of development providers and those of locals, desiring to seriously address people's needs. The project documents identified poor communities as their primary target for concern. It was assumed these communities would benefit directly or indirectly from the project interventions. Accordingly, the projects' initial ideas and announcements were designed to reach locals and ensure their participation. It became later evident that specific criteria would be applied to determine who could obtain the projects' assistance. In reality, those excluded were the poor, as they could not fulfill such conditions as paying the membership fees and/or contributing assets such as land. Certain activities, including public meetings and literary and nutrition classes, attracted large numbers of people. These forms of interaction served the objectives of both actors; the

projects had the opportunity to persuade large numbers of people to its ideologies and to display measurable achievements, while villagers placed themselves within the reach of the projects in the expectation that they would obtain some benefits.

Nevertheless, some communities and individuals benefited more than others. The research participants in the WNASP and the NKRDP sites believed that communities which possessed influential members would always maintain privileges and would be accorded initial priority when development inputs were offered. This situation generated a lack of trust and respect for the development partners involved, including IFAD, state institutions and government authorities, and commercial banks. The state authorities claimed to adopt the concepts of participation, equity, and self-reliance. In practice, state institutions and bureaucrats did not honor these commitments. Almost everyone I interviewed attributed the lack of services and deteriorating living conditions to government policies. Chandulal (1999:11) analyzes the Government's Comprehensive Development Strategy (CDS) and 'Triple Program for Economic and Institutional Salvation' (TPEIS) by arguing that these programs have merely increased poverty and inflation.

The attitudes of government officials have influenced people's perceptions regarding the role and importance of education. The dominant purpose of highly educated politicians, leaders and influential officials seems to be 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 partake in

decision-making processes, access resources and hence provide advantages to their own people or locality. Despite the benefits that were gained by certain communities, this attitude gradually started to create divisions, ill-feeling and conflict. Most of the internal conflict in Sudan, whether in the former South Sudan, Darfur or East Sudan, was initiated by groups which believed that development plans and resource allocation were privileging certain regions and groups (MA-SSI, interview). They accused the central government of marginalizing the people of their own regions. Therefore, there is a need to enact justice and equality by allowing the rule of law to prevail and by implementing balanced development strategies. State governments must ensure the engagement of ordinary people in the decision-making process, especially when allocating resources for development.

As a result of power dynamics, some people in the WNSAP accessed loans while others did not. This inspired a negative perception of the project's local partners, specifically the farmers' organizations and commercial banks. Moreover, people's past experiences with aid agencies which previously delivered free assistance, as well as their own views regarding government funding, diminished their commitment to repaying loans. This provoked the development agency to adopt a different strategy in the NKRDP. This entailed obtaining initial guarantees, and consequently created a program with a tendency towards exclusivity. Community members were asked to register as members of the Village Development Organizations (VDOs), pay membership fees and contribute the first installments of the village revolving fund (*Sandug*) before being deemed eligible for loans. The poorest failed to fulfill these requirements and thus did not participate in micro-credit

programs. This experience with formal credit, delivered via the banks in both case studies, indicated that the majority of the villagers were unable to fulfill these conditions.

The argument for efficiency, which would derive from beneficiary contributions, was based on the projects' theoretical assumptions, rather than empirical evidence and an understanding of prevailing socio-economic conditions. However, in order to bring the element of development into the realm of micro-finance, this research supports Remenyi (1991) and Otero's (2005) suggestion that financing the poor must be applicable to and consider their reality. Otero (2005:10-13) proposes that micro-finance should serve the poor, rely on permanent institutions and maintain efficient links to the national financial system.

Initially, the rhetoric of participation was employed by the projects to generate awareness and provoke an approving response. The projects conducted comprehensive awareness campaigns and extension activities, which resulted in a large number of individuals and groups joining the projects. For example, the NKRDP staff believed that people's consciousness of and belief in the project's vision must be raised before initiating activities on the ground. Based on this, the project organized intensive awareness and animation campaigns. Despite the crucial nature of this approach, it did not suit every community. Communities with strong and active grassroots organizations and popular movements found these programs boring and a waste of time. Participation theorists argue that people with previous experiences and skills should be accorded the chance to develop their own ideas and knowledge (Lane, 1995; Freire, 1998). Overall, the projects' efforts attracted participation when they offered resources, but

failed to sustain their interventions when the flow of resources ceased. This implies that when the projects concluded, locals were incapable of sustaining the associated activities. Fernando (1995:181) asserts that ideology may inspire participation in the short term, but cannot sustain it in the absence of adequate resources. The collapse of community activities such as nutrition classes and school and village nurseries suggests that, because the flow of resources or incentives stopped, local people had no stake in maintaining practices (Pretty and Scoones, 1995:159).

The poor, who struggled to meet their basic needs on a daily basis, had no time or resources to make available in the self-help development approach employed by development providers to promote free market policies. Instead, the projects' self-help approach denied people the right to health, education and other basic services. It attempted to ensure that people became responsible for their own service provision. The local communities obviously lacked the capacity to be fully responsible for all community affairs. However, participatory development requires that any changes affecting those targeted by development interventions are appropriate to their needs (Vincent, 2004). It is clear that the interventions were designed according to the perspectives of the government and funding agency, which could conflict with those of locals. The imposition of the government's agenda and the development agency's strategies were confronted by local realities of high levels of poverty and illiteracy, as well as communities' perceptions of government initiatives and external development agencies. Research participants from many villages revealed that the projects, endowed with their new self-help approach, became a burden. Further activities were proposed and greater

numbers of visitors arrived, while the continuous field visits made by the project staff demanded the exertions of community members. As detailed in Chapter Two, Berner and Phillips criticize the application of the self-help approach. The self-help capacity of people must be explored and made visible before such an approach is adopted. They suggest that it is important to recognize the capability of the poor to act as agents in their own development without falling into the neo-liberal trap. If development providers forgo the provision of the resources that are needed by poor communities to improve their living conditions, are they still capable of offering the guidance and appropriate technical solutions which justifies their involvement?

Despite the government's ambitious programs outlined in the Comprehensive Development Strategy, the projects' contributions to achieving the outcomes of this strategy were limited. The project participants were neither involved in productive activities which generated economic growth and promoted government policies, nor did they become convinced of the new socio-political structures established by the projects. The limited engagement of locals with the projects' ideology reflects their passive resistance to the 'tyranny of participation' (Williams, 2004:94). Further, the funding of these projects was based on a loan-financing system, which means that it was the legal and moral responsibility of the government and development agency to ensure that the money was well-spent and achieved the objectives. Donors should be aware of their moral responsibilities and guarantee that funds are used wisely, otherwise the process of borrowing and repayment impoverishes, rather than enriches, future generations (Stiglitz, 2002).

Despite the negative perceptions people hold about the government's performance, recent changes have taken place in North Kordofan State. Local institutions have succeeded in developing participatory policies and strategies. If fully supported, these new policies can become the framework for moving towards genuine participatory governance and development. The main constraints could involve the limited availability of resources and the unknown willingness of development agencies to propel a positive shift towards changing their strategies and staff behavior. The central government and development agencies should support innovative strategies which involve local organizations and accommodate indigenous participatory practices. This would be useful when designing development interventions and would allow the practice of participatory development to become more successful.

The state appears to be an important development actor, particularly in situations where local communities lack essential public services. In order to ameliorate the living standards of rural people and empower them to achieve greater control over their circumstances and the decisions which shape their lives, a change in the attitudes and behavior of officials is necessary. In Sudan there is little commitment to planned policies, the rule of law, and consideration of people's right to pressure for quality resources and services. Developing a sense of 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 mechanism. Participatory development theorists (outlined in Chapter Three) assert that the main challenge for the twenty-first century is to

build relationships between ordinary people and the institutions that affect their lives, especially those of government. In order to cultivate new relationships between local people and state institutions, this research supports the literature (Gaventa, 2004:27; Williams, 2004:95), which offers two approaches: 1) strengthening the processes of citizens' participation by designing new forms of inclusion, consultation and/or mobilization in order to inform and influence institutions and policies; and 2) strengthening the accountability and responsiveness of these institutions and policies, by reforming their institutional design and incorporating structures which promote good governance.

Education is another essential component of the development process. Education plays a fundamental role in cultivating knowledge and skills and developing values of cooperation and sharing. Preparing people to be effective decision-makers in a democratic, participatory society can be achieved through a well-developed education system (Bordenave, 1994). The current national education policies, schooling system and public attitudes to the role of education do not create a solid foundation for preparing qualified development professionals and planners. National education policies have distorted the meanings of education. Therefore, there is a need for crucial reforms in this area.

Development Agencies' Concerns

The widely shared view among community development practitioners is that people's involvement in development will enhance efficiency, efficacy, sustainability and empowerment (Karl, 2000:109). In both case studies it was evident that the monitoring and evaluation procedures were

designed prior to entering the field. The programs and activities were documented, evaluated and reviewed according to pre-planned objectives. The external consultants and evaluation missions visited the project sites to assess the performance of each project and recommend changes, without involving the communities. Participants from related development organizations revealed that they had no knowledge of the evaluation mission's tasks or findings. The projects' authoritarian and rigid systems perpetuated an exclusive environment in the White Nile project and followed a similar trajectory in North Kordofan.

Indeed, a development agency's successful implementation of programs and achievement of tangible results have implications for its future, reputation and staff careers. When a development agency succeeds in portraying its achievements in a convincingly positive way, this allows it to maintain its relationship with a host country and guarantees its continued role as a development provider. Meanwhile, an agency's staff have their own personal interests. They are concerned with retaining their jobs and future opportunities. This could explain why the development agency and project staff often focus on achieving tangible outputs rather than adopting genuine people-centered approaches, as the latter require significant time, resources and long-term commitment.

Development agencies have been accused of wasting resources and abusing the trust of donors who assumed that their inputs would alter people's lives. Apparently, many development agencies do not seriously initiate transformative systems that can achieve real development. Their methods of operation render the implementation of genuine participatory approaches difficult or even impossible to apply (Schneider and

Libercier, 1995b). This limits opportunities for building local capacities. It was evident from some participants' responses that development agencies need to reform the way they operate and interact with primary stakeholders.

'Large amounts of our organization's fund goes towards salaries; the training of staff and running costs such as rent and fuel. What is left over for development is a very small amount. As an employee of an international NGO and a leader of a local NGO, I feel that I have developed myself rather than developing others' (FA-SSI/ Khartoum).

أوضحت الموظفة بإحدى المنظمات العالمية قائلة: كميات كبيرة من تمويل المنظمة يصرف على المرتبات والتدريب وإيجار والبدايات، وما يتبقى للتنمية عبارة عن كمية صغيرة جداً. نحن كموظفين- أعتقد بأننا ندرّب أنفسنا ولا نفيد الآخرين .

A former UN employee elaborated on this theme:

'Unfortunately, development agencies focus on producing and printing large amounts of reports full of achievements, to convince the donors. They never make real changes in people's lives. Development agencies do not need evidence on the ground; they need well-written reports and media coverage that show their seminars, conferences and meetings, and hence donors will be pleased. In fact, this was my personal reason for resigning from my previous job and developing my own business. I felt that 'we the professionals' were cheating the poor just for the sake of having big salaries and status' (BWF-FGD/ Khartoum).

للأسف فإن وكالات التنمية تركز على إنتاج وطباعة كمية كبيرة من التقارير التي تحتوي على إنجازات هائلة وذلك لإقناع الجهات المانحة بجدوى أنشطتها. ولكن ليس هناك إنجازات حقيقية على أرض الواقع. هذا هو السبب الرئيسي لتقديم إستقالتني من عملي السابق والإنخراط في القطاع الخاص. أشعر بأننا نحن المهنيين نغش الفقراء من أجل الحصول على مراكز ومرتببات

A development officer at the UNDP Khartoum explained:

We had many experiences where reports showed tremendous achievements, especially during the implementation period and before the projects stopped. For example, the Area Action Scheme was one of our projects in North Kordofan State that was phased out in 2000 and 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 have been corrupt, selfish, or seeking reputations and personal benefits. We always needed to start as fast as we could and produce visible achievements. There was no place for conducting social studies or investigating those who were excluded or marginalized. The field offices always look for more measurable results to convince and please those at the organization headquarters, and hence the donors (DO-SSI/ Khartoum).

أوضحت ضابطة التنمية بمكتب الأمم المتحدة بالخرطوم قائلة: لدينا كثير من التقارير التي تظهر الإنجازات الهائلة، خاصة في فترة تنفيذ المشاريع وقبل توقفها. أحد مشاريعنا في شمال كردفان قد إنتهى العمل به في عام 2000م. وتم تسليم ممتلكاته إلى الحكومة، وهي حولتها إلى عدد من المؤسسات الحكومية. نحن نبدأ عملنا بالاتصال

بالتقادات المحلية، بعضهم يكون فاسداً ويسعى لتحقيق أغراض شخصية. نحن ليس لدينا الوقت الكافي للتدقيق أو إجراء الدراسات الاجتماعية أو البحث عن أولئك الذين تم إستبعادهم أو تهيشهم. المنظمات تبحث دائماً عن إنجازات محسوبة ومرئية.

When alternative development approaches first emerged three decades ago, development agencies succeeded in projecting a good reputation and their belief that they were concerned about development. These organizations attributed the failure of previous development initiatives to top-down approaches, government policies and corruption. This enabled them to absolve themselves of any responsibility for failure (FAD-FGD, Khartoum). However, the image of development agencies started to change, as manifest in the fact that the research participants viewed development agencies and staff as part of the problem (Chapter Seven). Development agencies must change their norms, procedures, policies and attitudes in order to gain the trust of local people. They also need to conduct in-depth assessments of their internal social structures, select the right partners and build communities' capacities.

Participation theorists agree that limited community participation is not enough to ensure the sustainability of development efforts (Schneider, and Libercier, 1995b; Cleaver, 2004). They suggest that greater attention must be paid to fostering partnership, networks and dialogue between different stakeholders. Effective networks can provide knowledge, administrative support, political power and economic opportunities, and enhance the sustainability of grassroots organizations. Through networks, different groups can access a range of power-sharing opportunities within development processes. Specifically, they can become involved in consultation, decision-making and management, as well as

share responsibilities and risks. To ensure sustainability, certain conditions need to be considered by development agencies from the outset. These include the availability of sound technical information, the incorporation of community knowledge and experiences, organized and capable local organizations and indigenous ownership of decisions and choices (Schneider and Libercier, 1995b).

The WNASP and the NKRDP adopted a planning-based approach, whereby activities were defined before their implementation and indicators were established to continuously collect data using standardized formats. This meant that the inflexible framework, which entailed predetermined objectives, activities and outputs, did not allow room for the project participants to make significant changes (Davis, 1998; Mosse, 1998). In other words, the development agency and the government ministries involved imposed their power when identifying problems and interventions. According to ODA (1995) these practices negatively influence a project's effectiveness, because the interests of primary stakeholders are not considered, and therefore the targeted communities do not share ownership of the project activities. Critics of participatory initiatives highlight its instrumental nature and concentration on efficiency rather than on empowerment and transformation (Cleaver, 2001; Gaventa, 2004; Kothari, 2001). Therefore, the newly emerging theories of participation demand participation as a right. They perceive citizens as 'makers and shapers of development' (Gaventa, 2004).

This study supports the avocation of participatory monitoring and evaluation procedures, which can occur by establishing criteria and indicators in collaboration with the primary stakeholders. These procedures can become a learning

process for all development partners. The project design should be flexible enough to accommodate any new data or insights that may emerge during implementation (Uphoff, 1991). Adopting the type of process approach outlined in Chapter Three can aid the monitoring and assessment of on-going developments. It can also facilitate the review and adjustment of project strategies and implementation plans. This will mean that development partners can assess the quality of interventions early on and subsequently decide whether to continue, adjust or terminate its activities. A process approach will potentially advance the ability to reform the program according to the local context and allow a sense of ownership to develop among local people. It may also ease tensions for project staff who feel under pressure or threatened.

Non-governmental Organizations

There is an assumption that local groups and NGOs are better able to respond quickly and mobilize greater resources than government institutions (Brohman, 1996; Willis, 2005). Development theorists stress the important role of civil society groups in providing services and advocacy. This understanding has created greater openings for local NGOs worldwide. In Sudan, it was observed that national and regional NGOs had an intense presence and publicity. This presence is manifest in their large numbers at both national and regional levels and their relationships with international NGOs and other development agencies. On the other hand, especially after the conclusion of 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 provides services. It was presupposed that these NGOs were more reliable than the

government authorities (MAI-SSI, *Khartoum*). Moreover, grassroots involvement in various forms of decentralized decision-making has also become the propagation of neo-liberal approaches. Willis (2005:98) argues that both national and international NGOs are regarded as a means of facilitating development for a number of reasons. Firstly, it is expected that NGOs can provide services of a more appropriate nature to local communities. Secondly, NGOs rely on local knowledge and regularly utilize local material; therefore they are able to provide services more efficiently and effectively. Nevertheless, as explained in Chapter Five, research participants from different backgrounds agreed that the credibility of national and regional NGOs was questionable. In contrast to the expectations commonly expressed in the literature, research participants revealed their doubt and distrust of many national NGOs. For example, the members of these NGOs have been accused of mobilizing resources for themselves rather than for communities. Interviewees from the villages of both case studies were unaware of the roles and names of regional NGOs, which exceed two hundred and fifty in North Kordofan State alone.

Sudanese NGOs, particularly those which profess to promote development, face critical challenges. Ultimately, they must put these theoretical claims regarding development into practice. In order to do so, this research suggests that they develop a greater commitment and accountability to the communities which they claim to serve, and in doing so, improve their reputation. Likewise, the research supports the development of transparent structures and networks, as recent evidence suggests that federal structures can improve the functioning of local organizations (Mitlin, 2004:176).

After signing the peace agreement, the government established space for greater participation and open dialogue. Therefore, if they possess sincere intentions, NGOs now have opportunities to foster relationships, attract more resources and make genuine contributions to promoting nationwide participatory development. The most important role that national and regional NGOs can potentially play is that of supporting grassroots organizations to emerge from their isolation, interact with others and develop alliances with other international and state institutions. Sudanese culture can be theorized as a 'participatory culture'; the values, beliefs and practices contained within it encourage cooperative and fraternal relations and actions. NGOs should take advantage of this culture in order to motivate people to participate in development and to raise their awareness of citizens' rights and obligations, rather than merely engaging in advocacy with an underlying political agenda.

Development Professionals' Attitudes and Behavior

In Sudan, the main role of development workers or staff is to act as a catalyst. They are typically hired by development agencies or nominated by the state government to provide support to a project, and are either paid by or receive a supplement from these projects. The North Kordofan case study demonstrated the tension and lack of communication between the senior staff, whose main tasks were planning, training and supervision, and the field staff, who were responsible for contacts with local communities in day-to-day activities. The front-line fieldworkers (Meethan, 1995) who spent most of their time in the villages were under intense pressure emanating from all directions; from what were termed the 'headquarters staff' (KFO-FGD, interview) who pushed for

more discernible achievements, as well as from the frustrated communities whose priorities were neither seriously addressed nor met. The tension can be attributed to two factors: firstly, the existence of conflicting conditions of service, work facilities and work pressure; and secondly, the lack of open communication and consultation between the field staff and the management and supervisory officers at the state and locality levels. However, the senior project staff cannot absorb sole blame for this situation. In fact, the structure of development agencies may be at fault, in requiring a reorientation of staff practices, rules, incentives and procedures in order that they better suit participatory projects (Uphoff 1991).

This type of working environment raises concerns with regard to the sense of unity among the project staff. According to Evans (2003:3), unity 'is the degree to which members of an organization are willing to tolerate the differences and variations among themselves, cooperate and work together.' In theory, participatory development demands that open dialogue may be conducted without fear. Moreover, it requires a shift in the behavior of the project staff (Chambers, 1997). It is advocated that for participation to become a tool of emancipation, any conflict and inequality between actors must be addressed openly and honestly, even if this entails confrontation, a breakdown in communication and the temporary destruction of a cooperative atmosphere (Kelly, 2004). Through communication and mutual commitment to participation, the situation can be changed, because to function, various groups need to work together in harmony. In general, the project management needs to grant opportunities for training and the exchange of information upgrade the skills of field staff. They also need to stimulate respectful dialogue and

open communication channels with field staff, as well as with communities.

Another issue is the way that professionals gather information and share knowledge with communities. Both the NKRDP midterm evaluation mission (IFAD, 2004:3/4) and research participants revealed that different PRA techniques were employed to investigate people's problems and priorities; however, the outcomes were not considered in the design and implementation of plans. The implications of this are that 'participation' was used to legitimize what the projects had on offer, rather than to allow people to exercise their own decision-making power (Waddington and Mohan, 2004:220). It appeared that the way the NKRDP staff 'used' the PRA methods could actually constrain the flow and analysis of information and the decision-making process. It could also influence people's thinking and reasoning. During instances of discussion and debate, the project's professionals did not always remain neutral and merely function as facilitators. In fact, the interaction between the NKRDP professionals and the communities observed in the context of PRA techniques confirmed the need to be concerned about the spread of bad practice. Such a spread may be related to a superficial understanding of techniques, limited training and the inappropriate style of some facilitators which sees them undertake to 'generate and own knowledge' (Chambers, 1997:211). However, the responses of local participants, as discussed in Chapter Seven and Chapter Eight, suggest that PRA methods could provide opportunities for local communities to express themselves analyze their own problems and propose solutions. Indeed, development providers who profess to adopt participation should realize that local

communities are not the passive recipients of development interventions (Lozare, 1994), but that they have knowledge and accumulated experiences to offer. Their knowledge could assist in developing technical solutions that have a greater local resonance than external technology does (Uphoff, 1991). Participatory methods could also be utilized as a tool to help local communities reflect on and challenge their own perceptions, behaviors and experiences.

The project staff should also be constantly aware that they represent an external organization whose role is to support local organizations and equip them to lead the movement towards societal change (Beaulieu and Manoukian, 1995). Accordingly, development staff need to identify the shortcomings of their internal systems of organization and to confront the realities that contribute to the failure or limited outcomes of activities. As highlighted in Chapter Eight, it may be that many of them are not prepared to face the consequences of criticizing organizational policy, which could pose a risk to their career opportunities. It must be acknowledged that development efforts require dedicated and sincere professionals who can offer valuable knowledge and experiences to local people (Black, 1991), as well as possess the ability to amend this external knowledge to suit local conditions.

Addressing Power Relationships

Chapter Five demonstrated how local power relations may influence development plans and outcomes. It was evident that democratic and military governments both rely on traditional leaders and local elites to communicate with ordinary people and facilitate the flow of services. A senior government official affirmed this:

'The present government relies on traditional leaders to run communities' affairs. In fact, this is a dilemma because while some leaders are good, the majority are not, however, all regimes, whether dictatorial or democratic, adopt the same strategy' (SG-SSI/ Khartoum).

تعتمد الحكومة الحالية على الزعماء التقليديين لإدارة شؤون المجتمعات الريفية. المشكلة أن بعض القيادات تفكر في مصالحها الشخصية، وبالرغم من ذلك فإن الأنظمة المختلفة، ديمقراطية أو عسكرية، تتبع ذات النهج من أجل المحافظة على السلطة.

It has been proven that even democratic decentralization simply furthers the empowerment of local elites and fails to constitute a forum for the voices of the marginalized (Gaventa, 2004:32). However, under a democratic system, the rule of law, openness of society and freedom of the media does unveil greater occasions for exposing misconduct and oppression.

The outcomes of the White Nile case suggest that there is a need to acknowledge the influence of power relations in shaping the effects of development. Recording and analyzing patterns of participation, and how these link to the success or failure of an activity, could aid projects in processing the social identity of prominent actors, the features and dynamics of power, and the roles of influence in villages (Mosse, 2001). The presence of development projects can create different forms of conflict or competition within both diverse and homogenous communities. On the other hand, initiating dialogue on the topic of power relations can lead to confrontation if people openly express their views; many people, especially in rural communities, instead endeavor to avoid it, and therefore development professionals should treat these situations with the utmost care. Hickey and Mohan (2004)

point out that participation cannot take on a transformative nature if projects do not challenge existing power relationships and instead work around them to deliver technically efficient services. To support participatory initiatives, projects must have enough information about the social and geographical map of the area in order to factor in existing administrative and social units (Uphoff, 1991:494). The identification of power relationships should take place during the appraisal phase, which would from the outset draw attention to any conflicts or negative outcomes which could emerge during the subsequent phases.

The literature on participatory development also focuses on the development of women's organizational and managerial capacities. It is widely believed that such capacities cannot be realized for women without their direct involvement in making the decisions that affect them (Weekes-Vagliani, 1995). However, gender-based values in the site of the White Nile Agricultural Services Project, particularly within homogeneous communities, affected women's full involvement in the development process, their mobility, and their chances of developing their capacities. This situation has persisted for centuries. It is apparent that within homogeneous groups, as in the White Nile case study, certain indigenous practices transformed into non-negotiable norms which could not be challenged by insiders alone. This implies that even educated people, who are usually the ones leading changes within a society, may not be able to challenge the situation. This is due to the fact that there are always some groups or individuals whose interests depend upon the maintenance of existing power structures (SAM-SSI, interview). These groups or individuals benefit from the structures of kin or tribal relationships, which

do not tolerate conflict within a social group. This allows them to oppose reform, especially that which is proposed or led by insiders. In homogenous White Nile communities, even those possessing knowledge and skills are unable to confront this situation in isolation, regardless of whether they are male or female. These circumstances need to be addressed and challenged by development agencies, regional and national NGOs and government institutions, rather than being blindly approved of or tolerated.

Development projects can create forums for dialogue and network-building, particularly in areas where conflict and tension exist. This could be realized by the organization of workshops at multiple levels, from the grassroots level to a higher state level, which would group all concerned parties together to focus on a set of issues. As detailed in Chapter Six, development actors could learn from the experiences of the Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Resources and Irrigation in the White Nile State, which aimed to raise leaders' awareness of the value and implications of protecting public assets. Educating people on their rights and responsibilities is also an important element involved in readjusting power relationships, improving government practices and enhancing development outcomes.

To place the functions of participatory development into an appropriate context, there is a need to examine the historical perspective of this phenomenon (Cooke, 2004:51). The main issue involved is the demand for learning from others' experiences. An in-depth analysis must be conducted before a decision is made about rejecting or replicating potential ideas. Empirical analysis can help in identifying the potential

problems, failures and successes that have accompanied previous experiences.

Furthermore, in order to empower local communities in general and marginalized groups in particular; it has become an essential precondition for many development interventions to encourage the formation of local organizations.

Formation of Community Organizations

Organizations such as associations or committees are seen as important channels of any participatory development approach. Both case studies, but particularly that of North Kordofan, demonstrated that the formation of new organizations was integral to the project's vision and strategies. The development agency, as a result of its unsuccessful efforts to strengthen local grassroots organizations in the White Nile, undertook some reforms in its interaction with local North Kordofan communities. One of these novel practices was the formation of new organizations placed under the direct supervision of the project staff, instead of leaving this task to the communities. Further, the NKRDP adopted democratic procedures whereby the majority vote wins. This 'democratic process' was introduced as a new way of selecting community representatives, in contrast to conventional local selection procedures. Local communities in both case study sites had typically selected representatives for voluntary grassroots organizations through consultation and negotiation. This process was believed to avoid excluding or offending anyone, and meant that communities could refrain from any perceptions of 'losers' and 'winners' (Burayidi, 2000:7). It was evident that the new procedures created divisions and tensions, as those who were not selected felt rejected and decided to keep away

from further involvement. This raises a concern regarding the ways that development providers deal with local systems.

The projects initiated the establishment of new Village Development Organizations in the NKRDP and new Cooperatives in the WNASP. Each project supported new organizations in the aim of replacing the traditional community-based organizations and assuming their responsibilities. It was also that the members of grassroots organizations would be empowered through training and their interaction with financial institutions. In reality, the projects introduced complicated structures that were understood by neither the members nor ordinary people. In addition, it was evident that these institutions created tension, especially in certain villages of North Kordofan State where more than one leader (*Sheikh*) existed. Meanwhile, in the White Nile state, the new structures sustained the exclusion of minority groups. These organizations did not yield local representation on Board of Directors for the projects, while none of their members attended the project meetings. In practice the projects adopted top-down administrative structures, which did not allow room for local organizations to participate in the decision-making process (Brohman, 1996). Meanwhile, it cannot be declared that the members of these organizations were empowered to criticise or evaluate major decisions concerning the staff, objectives or financing of the projects. It was noted that the research participants from the NKRDP area expected that these structures would phase out with the project's withdrawal, similar to what actually occurred with the WNASP, implying that the aim of participation as an end will be automatically undermined.

Both projects succeeded in establishing different forms of committees, including those in which both men and women were registered. However, this situation cannot be viewed as having been fully accepted by the communities. In fact, neither women nor men perceived it as important that they work together in the same committee, but rather that what matters most is that improvements be made and their lives changed for the better. As explained in Chapter Seven, the national NGO Popular Development Works (PDW) has acknowledged these realities. Accordingly, it has decided to respect people's preferences and attract their involvement through existing local organizations.

The new structures neither replaced the old organizations nor empowered the members of the new. Instead, they deprived traditional groups and organizations of opportunities for empowerment. Traditional associations, such as educational committees, the native administration and *El-Goodeya* councils, continued to conduct their duties. At the same time, the new Village Development Organizations in the NKRDP dealt only with issues related to the project, such as credit, assembling people for meetings and welcoming missions and project staff. The newly created organizations identified the poorest households as ineligible for the credit programs and committee membership. The introduced conditions deprived them of their basic rights to voice their opinions and be heard by others. As a result, communities dissociated the project committees and activities from their traditional institutions. This demarcation between indigenous organizations and the project committees created two parallel sets of organizations. One represented the community, while the other represented the project. In this way, the establishment of new Cooperatives

in the WNASP and Village Development Organizations in the NKRDP was not based on negotiation and consultation. Instead, it was the outcome of struggles and confrontation.

A potential shift in power is difficult to contemplate for those wishing to achieve self-empowerment, as much as it is difficult for those asked to surrender power. The process demands courage and solidarity, and therefore development providers may need to take advantage of any sign of collectivism to promote justice and equality. An in-depth investigation into existing grassroots organizations, their nature, capacity and forms of representation, may also provide guidance for development decision-makers. When there is available information concerning who is involved or excluded and the reasons why, development facilitators are in a position to conceptualise internal power relations and how to handle them. However, 'building up local organizations requires time and considerable personal and institutional commitments' (Blackburn and Holland, 1998), especially if local traditions prove to be a hindrance to the involvement of certain groups or individuals.

Gender Issues

Genuine participation involves the equal and free flow of information, debate, joint moral responsibility and community representation. A critical question in this aspect is whether people can truly engage in open, equal and free debate. Theoretically they can, but in practice some are restricted from expressing their views or concerns for many reasons. People may feel shy, may not possess confidence or may feel inferior in the presence of powerful people and professionals. Another challenge is that social traditions may prevent women from

speaking out in public, even when attending meetings or taking on a role in committees. On account of this concern, there is a common assumption that women in developing countries are disadvantaged in comparison to men. The literature emphasizes women's strategic interests, including political representation, involvement in decision-making processes and access to greater opportunities. It is argued that these interests go largely ignored by mainstream development interventions. Furthermore, it is widely acknowledged that women's contributions to family livelihoods are at their most crucial in the poorest rural and urban communities. Accordingly, a spotlight on gender issues is perceived to be important in the context of participatory development, especially within certain sectors, such as rural development and livelihood regeneration projects.

In Sudan the Women in Development approach has entailed formulating separate components for women, which has a limited effect beyond those directly involved, in addition to its limited impact on the position of women overall. Despite these criticisms, this study supports the adoption of flexible approaches that suit local needs and take into account women's interests and preferences. This could constitute a rational option for building women's capabilities, knowledge, skills and confidence.

This study has explored gender issues because both of the projects under study have seriously considered involving women at various stages. It is important to acknowledge that economic Liberalization and the poor quality of services in rural areas have had a negative impact on the livelihoods of rural women. Women are left to manage scarce resources and to deal directly with harsh environments. At grassroots level, gender sensitivity was maintained in the WNASP's and the

NKRDP's design and approaches, which contributed to local women's involvement in various activities and in the new organizations. The implementing agencies of the NKRDP and the WNASP viewed mixed organizations as a means of involving women in development activities and initiating empowerment. This idea was conceived as an opportunity for them to exercise choice over conditions affecting them. These practices thus attempted to involve women in decision-making processes at community level and in accessing development opportunities. Osman (2002) asserts that women in rural areas of Sudan perceive themselves as having less social and economic value, and are generally powerless in comparison to men. However, the findings of the case studies contradict this view.

Designing special programs for women in the WNASP and NKRDP and supporting the formation of joint organizations for both men and women have helped to generate a better understanding of women's capabilities. In general, local understandings of this issue differed from the projects. The research participants were content that the separation of organizations by gender did not create problems or diminish the status of women. In North Kordofan, female participants described some women's groups and practices that men cannot take part in or attend, such as the *Sandug*, coffee groups and women's *Nafir*. These groups perform social and economic activities that contribute to different ways of supporting schools, poor families and social events. Male out-migration has created additional hardships for women in the White Nile and North Kordofan states. The deterioration of the natural environment places further burden on rural women, who must walk longer distances and spend greater time and energy on

collecting firewood, fodder and water. In consideration of these circumstances, women put their effort into fulfilling their daily needs and were satisfied with their own separate grassroots groups. It appears that women's problem is not a lack of participation at household and community levels and gender inequality, but is about poverty and access to the means of development which can ease the suffering of both men and women. Therefore, when development organizations impose their approaches upon communities, it cannot be claimed that these strategies empower the participants. For example, in both case studies, incorporating women into organizations with men granted opportunities for them to attend mixed meetings, yet they largely remained passive and showed little interest in being involved in the activities of mixed organizations.

Clearly, the development agency involved women in the projects via new structures and approaches, but we cannot conclude that this outcome will open space for women in existing organizations or transform social relations within communities, because these conditions are simply not of women's interest. Based on these understandings, it becomes evident 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). In light of this argument, Olesen (1994) asserts that women's views and actions are based on justifications that make sense in their own lives and contexts.

Koopman (1997:141), in her analysis of the roots of Africa's food problems, concludes that when resources made available by the state and donors to households subject to male control, women are rarely empowered to access inputs to

improve the productivity of their farms. In fact, the division of labor in rural communities in Sudan varies from the above situation. Men and women work together on farming operations such as planting, weeding and harvesting. Women may also engage in trade. In a way similar to many other traditional African societies, in Sudan women's work is valued and viewed as part of a non-competitive division of labor (Snyder and Tadesse, 1997:76). However, in Sudan women assume no economic responsibility. According to traditional custom, men should satisfy all financial needs for the family. 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, rather than by the type of gender-specific approaches employed. For example, community priorities are usually household- and community-oriented. In both case studies, the problem of water shortage created suffering and stress for women and girls, but when the research participants were asked to identify their problems, both men and women listed the shortage of water as a main concern. Another example is that the collection of fire wood is always a woman's responsibility, but when gas emerged as an alternative energy source made available in the cities, most men in the NKRDP preferred to use their loans to purchase gas stoves rather than invest in other activities (Chapter Eight).

The societies of the White Nile are among many in Sudan that have strict gendered codes of behavior (Osman, 2002:24). Accordingly, any organization which endeavors to challenge these cultural norms may provoke conflict, resistance

or even the complete rejection of its interventions, as explained in Chapter Eight. There is therefore a need for an in-depth understanding of these social norms and the development of flexible strategies to suit the local context. Development planners must acquire clear ideas about women's identities, interests, resources, capabilities and constraints that they may come across when involving women in development initiatives (Cornwall, 2003). Women's programs, especially those designed from external perspectives, could even face resistance from women themselves, as they too are influenced by cultural norms and economic conditions. This situation demands a practical framework that adopts and integrates suitable features from both approaches of Women in Development (WID) and Gender and Development (GAD). This framework should be based on local women's needs and priorities. It should also consider the internal social changes that are associated with different stages of development, as well as the level of awareness of both men and women (GCRT, 2003:10).

Indigenous Values, Structures and Practices

Sudanese society is open and trusting in spite of the authoritative and bureaucratic nature of the official system (Abdel-Atti, 2004). Sudanese culture emphasizes that knowledge and practices be based on values, which are reflected in sensory and visual perceptions. According to Burayidi (2000:7), this stands in contrast to European cultures, which prefer that knowledge and information be gained through cognitive means such as counting and measuring. This research supports Burayidi's suggestion that cultural differences require development planners to demonstrate their sensitivity to various views and undertake fair and impartial planning.

As explained in Chapter Seven, the people of the NKRDP case study in small communities and form bonds through different relationships. Their values prohibit them from abandoning each other, especially in cases of hardship and calamity. There is therefore a great deal of material concerning communal action, cooperation and solidarity in their spoken language. Poem and songs praise those who maintain steadfast to their values and deride those who fail to live up to these values (Shahi, 1981). While using the PRA history-profile technique, the research participants recited a native poem that described the changes that have taken place during the last century and how people have handled them. Local values appear to be what has constructed people's relationships, which contradicts the individualist bias of neo-classical economics (Friedmann, 1992:47).

In contrast to the White Nile, the social organization and value systems of North Kordofan do not tolerate domination and individualism. Those who are well off or endowed with status have correspondingly greater obligations and responsibilities towards the community. In North Kordofan, leadership was observed to be about respect and trust. Local people worked together to implement community projects and help the poor or those in the service of the community. Social or economic participation in community affairs was part of a moral framework guided by rights, responsibilities and obligations. Relationships within families and communities in the villages depended upon compromise and reconciliation. People typically attempted to avoid confrontation or criticism of each other in public, instead preferring to negotiate with and offer protection for each other, especially for women. Therefore, local communities in North

Kordofan used village-contributory systems to overcome the difficulties created by the project's mechanisms. In some villages, the wealthy contributed donations to ensure the involvement of poor families in the 'project committees.' Those participating in community development programs were never concerned with what they would gain in return; in fact, they made other people's interests their own. This type of contribution was not directly paid for and therefore difficult to put a quantitative value on (Folbre, 2001:66). According to Friedmann (1992:46) this work is a product of non-market relations, which does not occupy a place within mainstream policies but can fit into the alternative development framework.

Unlike in the NKRDP, the existence of irrigation schemes in the WNASP sites led to the formation of semi-formal organizations such as Farmers' Unions and the Production Councils, which had resources and links with state and financial institutions. However, evidence showed that these semi-formal organizations were neither trusted nor effective. Therefore, people were dependant on voluntary non-formal groups to run their affairs. Communities in the NKRDP and the WNASP sites both formed these grassroots associations to be service-oriented. Some were managed by men, and these organizations provided services to the community by managing educational and religious affairs. Women, on the other hand, were involved in participatory savings funds and social groups. These grassroots associations (GROs) were much more localized and operated largely on their own. They generally did not have relationships with regional and national civil organizations or with government institutions. Research participants attributed this feature to the unresponsive nature of government institutions and the lack of educated and influential

community members to represent communities, facilitate contacts and provide services. The formation of these GROs and their efforts to mobilize people, inspire action, and generate change indicated that people were able to see things as they really were and do something about it (Freire, 1972). However, their capabilities were restricted by the inadequacy of resources and limited access to assets and rights (Cleaver, 2001).

Both case studies showed that people in the project sites had diverse knowledge regarding climate, soil, varieties and uses of vegetation, and animal behavior, diseases and breeding. People depended on such knowledge in interacting with their environments. Local communities in the WNASP and NKRDP sites were also found to possess detailed knowledge of their own problems, priorities and solutions.

In both case studies, local people used highly complex strategies to survive in their harsh environments, where the dry season lasts for eight to nine months. They developed their own techniques and practical initiatives to deal with fluctuating natural and social environments. For example, traditional techniques were adopted for food storage and food. Development theorists have challenged externally imposed knowledge and seek to utilize local knowledge (Uphoff, 1991; Chambers, 1997; Sillitoe, 2002; van Vlaenderen, 2004). Indeed, any changes proposed for these settings should be examined by and negotiated with local communities, as responses from research participants have shown that some development interventions have been introduced without consulting local people. The undesirable experiences of the rehabilitation of bridges and the promotion of new animal breeds in the WNASP, and of the NKRDP's ignorance of the local farming calendar, raise concerns about the lack of consultation and

knowledge-sharing. It is believed that innovative development is dependent on a trial and error principle, which combines local experiences, ideas and techniques together with outside sources (Sillitoe, 2000). If this had been applied, the project might have earned a positive reputation. It has been proven that the stimulation of local experimentation functions well in exploring indigenous knowledge, strengthening people's confidence in their own solutions and producing options that are appropriate to ecological, economic and socio-cultural conditions (Hagmann et al.,1998:48-51). The essential ingredient is to involve people in decision-making processes and inform them of on-going changes. If this strategy is adopted, people may feel more comfortable about relating their positive experiences.

To incorporate ideas into practice, this research supports Edwards's (1993:79) suggestion that development professionals and experts need to appreciate the value of indigenous knowledge and practices. To do so, they should examine its relevance to various contexts. If not, professionals and experts may make disastrous mistakes, hence causing local people to lose faith in development providers and their staff. However, concern about the sustainability of their interventions should not be the primary concern of development agencies. Instead, they need to trust the knowledge and experience of local communities and negotiate, rather than enforce, their interventions.

The ultimate goal of participation is to empower people. Therefore, the concepts of empowerment and participatory citizenship are useful in constructing a framework for enhancing grassroots involvement. To improve the outcomes of development interventions, this study 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 supplies evidence on how various indigenous participatory values have protected and sustained people living in a harsh environment, and have provided support to the powerless and poor. It has showed how the rich and powerful in North Kordofan rejected the project regulations that enforced discrimination and exclusion of the poor. It also demonstrated how migrants, who moved from their poverty-stricken homelands to live abroad or in big cities, did not sever their relationships with relatives, neighbors and the community as whole. Instead, they continued to offer different forms of support. This suggests that this type of sharing and concern for others cannot be bought and sold, but can be strengthened, and the moral components of development can be central to its strengthening (Folbre, 2002:66). Chambers, in his theories of development (2004b), advocates an obligation-based approach in order to balance the rights-based approach. Chambers illustrates that the rich and powerful individuals of a community should commit themselves to aiding the poor and powerless. Elaborating on Chambers' ideas, and based on the findings of this research, I suggest a moral commitment approach as a way of improving the practice of development, especially at grassroots levels.

In addition to the assistance of powerful individuals, this approach requires the commitment of all development actors: government institutions, donors, development agencies and local NGOs. If each agency has solid value-based visions

that foster participation and local control of activities, then accountability mechanisms may be enacted to reflect these values (Kilby, 2006:955). The exclusion of the powerless cannot be overcome unless moral commitments and responsibilities develop and flourish among politicians, bureaucrats, and community leaders at different levels.

Development agencies must possess a clear vision of and strong belief in participatory concepts. Many authors and theorists, as related in Chapters Three and Four, affirm that participation should be central to development efforts. It can be achieved by adjusting conventional approaches and methodologies, establishing new relationships between stakeholders, and viewing people as partners and actors in their own development. To employ rational and productive approaches that empower local communities, certain conditions need to be considered, particularly by donors. For example, international development agencies must recognize that grassroots organizations are integral to participation, and must support them to manage their own development. This requires building up their capacities and providing them with, or facilitating the flow of, resources. They also need to view development as a dynamic, on-going process rather than as isolated projects designed and managed by outsiders (Lane, 1995). Furthermore, if development organizations profess their favor of participatory ideology, they must change their ways of thinking and operation. However, they must first educate their donors about the situation and how this can be evaluated and reformed.

The attitudes and behavior of development professionals pose a challenge to the practice of participatory development. Within development agencies, those genuinely

concerned about grassroots development should step out of their silence and advocate real changes to the policies and strategies of their organizations. When we speak of the operational system of an organization, we actually refer to the personnel who are in charge and who are thus implicitly credited or blamed for the credibility and achievements of these organizations. The staff and policy-formulators within these organizations need to display a real commitment for the poor. Cooke (2004:43) suggests that they may need to make difficult choices, which the possession of morals can help with, as this creates what are called 'principled change agents.' If development projects are to succeed, staff should maintain positive behavior and acquire adequate technical capabilities. Behavior can be reformed to produce transparency, openness and dialogue, which generate mutual respect and encourage teamwork. There is also a need for professionals to develop technical skills that meet the conditions of local environments. In this way, technically equipped, transparent, well-motivated and committed project staff can make real organizational changes.

On the other hand, project approaches should be designed with an open mind. It is important to understand the local system and be able to negotiate and maintain flexibility. External development providers should question the appropriateness of introducing and modifying existing local organizations. It may be more suitable to support the current indigenous system if this represents the diverse interests of a society and is accepted by various groups. Accordingly, the main role a development agency can play is that of developing the capacities of local grassroots organizations, which is more effective than merely focusing on qualitative achievements

(Uphoff, 1991: 494). It would also be of great value for development agencies to motivate those classified as rich, elite, or powerful to interact with and support their own communities, especially if this type of practice is already prevalent in certain settings. Moreover, joint management and decision-making can enhance a sense of local ownership, build grassroots capacities and facilitate the withdrawal of projects and the transfer of responsibilities.

Regarding the monitoring and evaluation of outputs and outcomes, development agencies need to adopt new criteria to judge the impact of interventions. However, the involvement of large numbers of people in each activity would not be an indication that development initiatives have achieved an economically 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 as merely activities that generate measurable outputs. This implies that by developing new interpretations and a new functioning framework, theory can be brought into practice.

Conclusion

This chapter has examined the main themes running throughout this research, and has offered a set of suggestions to improve the practice of participatory development. It has demonstrated that the policies of implementing agencies and the behavior and technical capabilities of their professionals have influenced the form and outcomes of project interventions, and thus also the extent of popular participation. The intention of both the WNASP and the NKRDP was to empower their participants and create self-reliant communities,

but little action was taken to make this intention a reality. This was because the participatory procedures of both projects succeeded in attracting large numbers of local people to the project activities, but it was the project staff who made decisions without incorporating the communities. Both projects failed to involve local communities in the processes of planning, monitoring and evaluation. The strategies employed thus merely realized participation as 'a means' rather than 'an end.' The case studies revealed that people's participation was essentially of a low level. Additionally, the creation of new local organizations did not fully combat exclusion or subordination because the factors and traditions which influenced these conditions in communities were not challenged.

To reverse the outcomes of these and similar projects, and to augment the impact of people's participation in development, this research suggests that development policies should support people's capabilities and seek out new ways of supporting individuals and groups who have no control over the factors influencing development. Moreover, in order to conceptualize the abilities of communities to achieve development, there is a need to identify the advantages and limits of change in consideration of local representation, power, resources and skills. Specifically, development agencies need to effect reforms to their policies. This demands that much time, effort and commitment is invested in building local capacities and creating accountable and transparent mechanisms that ensure inclusion and equality.

In this chapter, I have proposed a moral commitment approach that could bring various development actors to genuinely serve the targeted communities of development

interventions, by employing a values-based contract. This approach is based on basic principles, namely the morals and values with which those endowed with power, resources and skills may develop a sense of obligation to those without these types of capital. In other words, everyone within the sphere targeted by development is expected to actively provide support and take a positive stand on issues.

Conclusion

This study has examined development efforts in Sudan since independence. It has identified and discussed the successes and shortcomings of various development interventions. It has further employed a case study strategy to explore the participatory experiences of people in the North Kordofan Rural Development Project (NKRDP) and the White Nile Agricultural Services Project (WNASP). The projects were implemented by IFAD and the Government of the Sudan at different times and in different states. Each adopted self-help and Gender and Development approaches, with the intention of strengthening grassroots organizations and promoting micro-finance institutions and practices. I used various research methods to gain an in-depth understanding into the relationships between the primary stakeholders and development providers and facilitators. The testimonies of various participants clearly showed that people possessed diverse forms of knowledge and knew how to cope with their environments. In general, the extent of their involvement in these projects was influenced by their local culture, skills and education, as well as by the policies and credibility of development providers. In relation to the latter, grassroots participation has been shaped by: the adoption of free market policies, the failure to foster representative structures and community capacities, and the behavior and technical capabilities of staff. Regarding the communities themselves, the following factors limited people's engagement with development interventions: severe poverty and the lack of knowledge of how to deal with micro-finance institutions;

previous experiences with the government and aid agencies; the type and amount of aid and resources offered to the communities; exclusion from planning, monitoring and evaluation processes; levels of education and organizational capacity; and indigenous traditions.

With reference to the new concepts of citizens' rights, democratic governance, transparency and accountability and their impact on development processes, this study has argued that a main challenge for Sudan is building transparent government institutions and establishing civil society organizations which are accountable. Additionally, the sharing of knowledge among local communities and development professionals can constitute the foundation for adopting new technologies and practices, as well as for installing trust and productive relationships between both parties. The case studies have implied that the design of participatory development projects requires comprehensive knowledge of local settings, along with negotiation with the communities targeted for development. It has further been argued that if the poor and powerless are not accorded the opportunity to be involved in the decision-making process, they will remain unable to access resources and information or influence decisions in their interests. Both projects, despite their shortcomings and limited outcomes, managed to generate some new knowledge and appreciations using their novel ideology and approaches. Significantly, they changed previous conceptions of external assistance and introduced new values and practices.

Specific Research Findings

The two case studies have provided further evidence in support of the existing range of research findings on

participatory development. They have highlighted the constraints involved in participatory initiatives and pointed out that their instrumental nature seeks to achieve efficiency rather than empowerment and transformation. They have further supported the call to take into account socio-cultural factors when planning development projects. The findings of this study have provided an additional appreciation of how development providers and local communities engage with each other. The study has also highlighted the nature and potential of indigenous participatory systems, and raised some concerns regarding the policies and credibility of development providers, including the state, development agencies and national NGOs.

The study has related that Sudan since independence has experienced a succession of weak and ineffective governments that have ranged from elected democratic administrations to military regimes. These governments have failed to promote political stability or achieve balanced development in a country which is characterized by vast cultural and ethnic differences. As a result, internal conflicts have spread in various parts of the country and between different groups. Ethnic diversity, conflict, the political differences between the dominant parties and widespread poverty pose terrifying challenges. To achieve a unified, harmonious and cooperative society for Sudan, all parties concerned, as well as the international community, must equally seek in-depth understanding and display unbiased intentions. In this regard, the government needs to implement development approaches that encourage citizens to cooperate and live alongside one another in peace. The right to possess various identities, tribes and practices should be respected by

all. Therefore, the recognition and acceptance of cultural diversity by the government and political and social groups is crucial for initiating balanced development and promoting unity and social cohesion. Respect for different identities and cultures are in this way a fundamental precondition for meaningful participatory development.

Even in the two sample case studies, development assistance was unevenly distributed between villages and individuals. Communities which had influential and powerful members enjoyed considerable support and responsiveness from the government and development projects; while often the neediest received the least. This trend resulted in suspicion and lack of trust between development providers and communities.

Despite the projects' claims of adopting a non-exclusionary approach, this study revealed otherwise in the opportunities offered by the commercial banks in the formal credit component. The credit was accessed by the well-off individuals who could satisfy the banks' conditions, while most of the informal credit from the revolving village fund benefited the rich and middle class households, largely excluding the poorest in both project sites. It has been noted that the restrictions adopted by the projects and the banks proved to be shortcomings; these included membership fees, compulsory installments and rigid repayment schedules. Furthermore, severe poverty and a lack of knowledge of how to deal with micro-finance institutions constrained people's involvement in programs promoting self-reliance. The critical advantage of micro-finance institutions is their ability to reach the poor and generate sustainable changes in their lives (Otero, 2005). In order to achieve sustainable change in rural areas however, there is a need to first develop the managerial and technical

skills of grassroots organizations and to understand the realities of poor communities.

Similar to other research findings (Uphoff, 1991: 494; Tembo, 2003), this study illustrated that people's engagement in the project activities was influenced by their previous experiences in dealing with government and aid agencies. From these experiences people constructed their own views and expectations regarding development inputs. The North Kordofan case study provided evidence that the project, as a resource provider, wielded power over local communities. People began to ask for whatever the project had to offer, rather than what they actually needed. This confirms that 'local need' may be shaped by local perceptions of what development agencies can justifiably and realistically be expected to deliver (Cooke and Kothari, 1995:80; Mosse, 2001:20).

In North Kordofan, young men tend to return from the cities during the rainy season to perform farm work. These men revealed that the NKRDP's interventions did not offer satisfactory reasons for them to remain after the rainy season. It has been confirmed by various sources from both case studies that the resources made available for improving the living standards of rural communities were too limited to achieve this. In both case studies, the young men spoke of the need for the development of infrastructure, agro-industrial enterprises and mechanisms to process local products. This proves that local people are fully aware of their environment and can conceive of how to release and utilize their potential. This also demonstrates that farming activities, especially in rural areas, remain a more viable option than casual jobs in urban centers.

Material interest is a very powerful factor in determining the responses of and interactions between development staff and local communities. Whether projects meet community needs and address priorities has been found to be a determinant factor in the quality of people's participation. As Edwards (1993:86) argues, people generally display willingness to cooperate if they are given the necessary resources, information and opportunities. This means that people's interest in taking part in development activities, as well as in having project staff present in the villages, is influenced by the types of benefits or services provided by development or aid agencies (Mosse, 2001). Indeed, when the communities of some villages covered by the NKRDP were given the resources and opportunities to make decisions, they showed enthusiasm for cooperating and helping each other. However, the formulation, monitoring and evaluation of the project's inputs and outcomes were always undertaken by the project staff and other outsiders. As a result, most of the documents and completion reports represent the views and visions of the development agencies rather than those of the local people. In some cases these reports actually contradicted indigenous values and perceptions, and thus undermined locals' commitment to the project. This outcome supported the World Bank's findings, which assert that people cannot fully commit to a project if they are not a part of its foundation (World Bank, 1996:8). However, evidence from the NKRDP demonstrates that people developed innovative ways to involve those who had been excluded.

The sustainability of development interventions remains a concern for all development providers. In this regard, the White Nile case study showed that sustainability cannot be

guaranteed if local people are not free or skilled enough to take over responsibility for development. It also illustrated that the project approaches failed to challenge power issues. The study supports various suggestions relating to the improvement of the sustainability of development activities. To overcome the problem whereby activities phase out upon a project's withdrawal, development agencies should adopt the following measures: integrating local knowledge and experiences, supporting grassroots organizations that represent diverse groups, instilling a sense of community ownership of projects and paying attention to economic institutions, intermediate technologies and the role of education.

The role of national and regional NGOs has also been explored. Despite donors' trust and newly created opportunities for these NGOs, this study showed that most national and regional NGOs have not engaged in development efforts at grassroots levels. Rather, the majority of national NGOs have been involved in advocacy activities and hence have become trapped in political conflict. They also lack the ability to negotiate, coordinate and implement joint activities with other actors. Moreover, the study findings proved that freedom of association alone does not automatically guarantee accountable and efficient community organizations. The transparency of NGOs and the reputation of their members are also important considerations. On the flipside, grassroots organizations may lack the capacity to produce the changes sought by communities. Despite this reality, most voluntary grassroots associations in North Kordofan and the White Nile have proven themselves to be accountable and capable of mobilizing local resources and inspiring communities. These associations maintain responsibilities to their homelands and to their

members. The formation of voluntary grassroots organizations and the impacts of these were influenced by local priorities and the need for social cohesion. It was discovered that most of the existing local services and development achievements were the products of the efforts of grassroots organizations. Unfortunately, these grassroots organizations were significantly localized and worked on their own. They possessed neither links with national or state civil society organizations nor relationships with government institutions. This was due to their limited ability to establish contacts and defend their rights as an association. In this regard, both projects failed to assist in constructing networks between grassroots organizations and development providers, especially those of the government and the private sector. This study has proposed that international organizations which are intent on reaching impoverished communities must be aware of the role and reputation of their local partners, and must look into how accountable non-governmental organizations promote participatory approaches.

In consideration of community organizations, this study has highlighted how participatory development theorists and organizations are increasingly emphasizing the importance of supporting community organizations to deal with development affairs. Meanwhile, this research has also illustrated that the projects established new organizations as part of their strategies. They encouraged the selection of members of new committees through democratic procedures which involved nomination and election. The local communities were unfamiliar with these practices, which created ill-feelings and tension among some groups. The projects also formed community institutions similar to the arrangements of bureaucratic structures (Cleaver, 2001:42), with complicated

features and references that ordinary people found difficult to understand and manage.

This study has demonstrated that the formation of new organizations by the WNASP merely accumulated more power for the already powerful, while in North Kordofan the project failed to seize the opportunity to support a well-established consultative and participatory system. This led local people to accord a separate identity to external interventions, dissociating the project's committees and activities from their own. This created a new, isolated identity associated with the projects. As with Mosse's (1995:144) findings, the projects declared their creation of new local organizations, whereas in reality they merely recombined existing roles, power relations and the influence of social status.

Local people did not exert control over the projects as the new organizations failed to involve all, while those involved were not sufficiently empowered to run or sustain the projects' initiatives. The formation of new development organizations represented some 'beneficiaries,' but in a problematic way (Kothari, 2001). These new structures gave a voice to certain groups and individuals, especially women, but gave no genuine agency, as their power over inputs and outcomes was either limited or non-existent.

In terms of power, this study has found that the existence of conflict and unequal power relations in the White Nile constrained community solidarity and jeopardized the commitment and willingness of some to participate. It conforms to the interpretation of UNOPS (2001:21) that power relations can negatively affect the extent and quality of participation in development initiatives. The findings from the White Nile have proven that the degree to which members of

the community and local committees trust each other and their leaders was a crucial factor in determining the effectiveness of local organizations. In general, if leaders do not gain respect and trust, the entire social fabric may disintegrate.

In highly multi-ethnic communities such as the White Nile, in which minority groups may experience exclusion, special attention should be paid to representation and to raising the capabilities of newly formed organizations. This requires a degree of effort which most development agencies are not willing to put in insofar as they are constrained by limited time and resources, which seemingly justifies their excessive interest in producing rapid and quantitative achievements.

In comparison, voluntary grassroots organizations established by local people were found to be more representative, trusted and sustainable than those created by development agencies. Furthermore, decisions regarding the formation of new organizations should be based on comprehensive knowledge of the needs, social structure, traditions and power relations of communities; if not, such decisions may lead to conflict, and may create or maintain the exclusion of some groups and individuals. Both case studies suggest that the establishment of new organizations by development agencies as a mechanism to ensure participation should not become commonplace. Instead, the situation on the ground should be carefully investigated before deciding either to form new organizations or support existing ones.

The behavior and technical skills of development professionals has emerged as an issue of contention in this study. The NKRDP case exposed the tension existing between two groups of professionals: the seniors and the field staff. The field staff did not share similar opinions regarding the meaning

of participation and the way they should interact with local NGOs. Evidently, no administrative or organizational arrangements existed through which the management and field staff could share their ideas and concerns. This gave rise to two potential situations: either the groups resolved their conflict or one group abandoned the project (Tembo, 2003:45). In the latter case, it was most likely to be the fieldworkers who did so, as they felt under pressure and that their input was rarely appreciated. Indeed, double standards for dealing with different professionals and the accumulation of benefits for certain types can encourage client-patron relationships to foster between development organizations and staff (Cooke, 2004:50).

The NKRDP case study demonstrated that when project staff are under pressure, have limited time and are burdened with a long list of proposed activities to implement, their main concern is to demonstrate visible achievements so as to satisfy their employer and preserve their jobs. Development organizations may be perceived by some as a means of gaining and maintaining benefits. The threat of sanctions or the withdrawal of career opportunities and assistance did influence the behavior of the projects' staff and communities. This observation supports the literature which suggests that due to certain policies of development providers, some groups may view the development organization as a tool to achieve personal objectives. As a consequence, these groups behave as weak and dependant partners (Uphoff, 1991:499; Taylor, 2001:124). In this way, both case studies raise concerns with regard to the technical capabilities of professionals and their willingness to embrace and share knowledge with communities.

The utilization of participatory methods has become one of the most prominent features of participatory development initiatives. NKRDP was no exception to this trend. However, the use of Participatory Rural Appraisal methods (PRA) by NKRDP staff did not ensure that people's needs, priorities and perceptions were taken into account. The project adopted PRA techniques over the course of several sessions to collect information and attract people's attention, in order that the staff would then convince them to adopt the project's approaches and take part in various activities. The NKRDP staff employed the PRA methods as simply a matter of social-psychological technique (Cooke, 2004:45). This meant that the techniques, which are supposed to enhance consciousness and emancipation (Freire, 1972), were reduced to a tool to draw people to the project. During my research, I used the methods of historical profile and focus group discussions, through which research participants were able to identify a range of crises that had influenced their lives. They also identified different measures and actions that had been undertaken in the past to improve the situation or overcome difficulties. This indicated that the communities were not passive and did not require external motivators to act.

The gender dimension of development activities gained much attention from the projects. In both projects, the number of women involved in most activities was higher than men, which certainly served the implementing agency's instrumental goal. Each project's staff showed an undeniable interest in empowering women and expanding their presence within the societies. However, this intention was constructed around the projects' visions, rather than those of the populace. Female activity in the new mixed committees was enforced by the

projects and encouraged by the presence of female staff and village leaders. The practice of separate organizations for men and women does not necessarily embody any form of discrimination or exclusion of women. Both male and female research participants instead perceived the old system as a part of the social fabric that had functioned as a way of life for generations. Its operation brings about the efficient division of responsibilities and concerns. Nevertheless, the mixed committees of the NKRDP did create new insights and enhance the appreciation of women's knowledge; however, this did not change male perceptions of gender roles and rights, especially those at the household level. Despite some positive outcomes, the women participating in the mixed committees displayed indifference to maintaining their presence in these organizations. This demonstrated how cultural ideology can influence and determine gender relations at the community level. The study supports Baum's (2000) assertions that: primarily, development planners should help the community members to re-examine their cultures, identify shortcomings and accept changes; and secondly, they must be aware that their own values may conflict with the community's values. Accordingly, the development agency and gender specialists must take into account the historical context of development, as well as the social and cultural contexts of women's lives.

Communities with high levels of education and organizational capacities had achieved some form of development in their villages without external assistance. In Sudan, education greatly influences women's participation in economic activities and decision-making processes at household, community and national levels. Education is perceived as a woman's passport to a higher status within all

levels. At national level, research participants indicated that limitations on new opportunities for women or women's subordination are no longer a problem. However, it was evident from some responses that there was doubt about the actions, inputs and performance of the women holding key posts within the government and other influential institutions, and whether these women were truly concerned about addressing women's issues. Cornwall (2003) asserts that it may be necessary to create a presence for women's voices by placing them in existing committees, but that this may not be sufficient if female participants are unconcerned about women's issues in general, or if their ideas are not respected by men. Overall, the presence of solidarity between men and women in Sudan would be an asset in planning and implementing successful development initiatives.

Another gender-related concern pertains to the visions of development agencies. These tend to focus solely on women, despite claims about general gender sensitivity. In this respect, some young men are vulnerable due to limited resources and a lack of employment opportunities, but remain ignored. The White Nile case study demonstrated that traditions also constrained some men's participation in community development. As a minority group, the new generation of educated, skilled and productive men who decided to remain in the villages were suppressed by traditional leaders who opposed their status. Gender specialists and planners must have open minds and a holistic view of the situation.

Indigenous participatory systems were investigated, particularly those of North Kordofan. It was discovered that local cultural values provided meanings and a sense of identity for communities. These cultural values endowed communities

with a framework through which they could negotiate and make judgments regarding development interventions and providers. This research has demonstrated that within this framework, different folklore genres and practices embodied participatory concepts, ideologies and techniques. Folklore could provide development professionals with social data and inspiration to create messages to motivate communities to actively pursue development. This study's findings support previous research which attests to the influence of social values in shaping participatory development activities. Similar to Kassam's study (2002), this research suggests that the solidarity and experiences of North Kordofan communities are proof that certain traditions and practices are supportive and productive in development, and can become the base for genuine participation.

The findings have demonstrated how people were inspired by local values and internal social relationships. People participated as both individuals and households to build and maintain community premises or share resources and labor to aid the needy or those in the service of the community. For locals in North Kordofan, participation implied that people work collectively and effectively to develop their community. Participation was seen as a value around which local lives revolved, and as a tool used to share ideas and resources for the purpose of producing change and confronting hardships and disasters. The efficacy of these cultural interpretations contradicts the basic concepts of Modernization theory which, according to Rostow (1960) and Lewis (1995), reject tradition and advocate the adoption of externally derived values. This study conforms to the recognition that when people have a common interest, they tend to act collectively and are driven by

their shared values. This recognition has engineered a shift from the classic development theory based on individualism and self-interest.

Within the North Kordofan context, participation in community development affairs, especially in rural areas, was seen as a thing of value and simultaneously an obligation. This social norm was typically also institutionalized by migrants through the formation of associations outside the villages, either in other cities or abroad. The public participation of individuals may be negotiated and mediated within households or communities and be shaped by prevailing social norms and structures (Cleaver, 2001:51).

Suspicion and reluctance involved in the surrender of power by powerful groups or individuals is overly generalized. However, participation in development activities through voluntary grassroots organizations challenged common assumptions about the redistribution of power. Most of those in North Kordofan with power, in the form of status and wealth, endeavored to give back to their villages. This altruistic behavior stands in contrast to the dominant assumption within the existing literature regarding power relations, which perceives power as part of an oppressive framework, while neglecting power's productive aspects (Mosse, 2001). This raises the issue that the moral values of a community should be considered when designing externally funded development projects.

Despite the disparities in their formal education levels and experiences, people had the sense and capabilities to judge what was in their best interests. Locals in the project sites were able to identify their problems and evaluate their experiences from their own perspectives. They presented solutions which

were sometimes different from those which an outsider might offer. However, their circumstances forced them to adopt specific strategies when development providers tried to enforce their policies and visions. Evidence demonstrated that local knowledge did not contribute to planning processes.

Evidence from both case studies has attested to the fact that local communities were not consulted and their knowledge not sought in the conduction of some activities, which gave rise to negative perceptions of the staff's technical capabilities after the failure of certain interventions. This observation broaches the need to constantly keep in mind the fundamentals of alternative development approaches, which emphasize extracting and benefiting from local knowledge. The projects' technical staff may be reluctant to seek the opinion of illiterate locals, based on the assumption that they will not have valuable knowledge to contribute (Uphoff, 1991:492).

This research contributes to the debate surrounding the theory and practice of participatory development. Firstly, by exploring the nature of interactions between local communities and development providers, this study analyzed the capacity and potential of both parties to shape development processes. This research has demonstrated that the relationship between government authorities, as main providers of development, and local communities was almost non-existent. Secondly, it can be concluded that the self-help approach of the WNASP and the NKRDP failed to make significant progress towards helping the poverty-stricken majority. The study supports Berner and Phillips' (2005:27) suggestion that self-help approaches should be considered as complementary and not as an alternative, isolated means of gaining access to public services. With regard to women's integration in development, this study has added

fuel to the debate around gender and development. It has shown that there is concern over the input of highly educated women, the vulnerability of unemployed and marginalized young men, and the impact of strict gendered codes of behavior in some communities, which may influence women's involvement in interventions. However, the concern about women's integration must also be accompanied by consideration of what the women themselves want.

Recommendations for Future Research

The case studies expand the understanding of participatory development processes within Sudan. While this study has focused on Sudan, it also supplies a wealth of insight into participation in general and provides guidance for further studies or programs elsewhere. The results may be used by development planners, decision-makers, donors, project management, and non-governmental and local community organizations to design strategies for promoting effective and sustainable development.

Participatory development programs usually take place in specific social and institutional contexts, thus requiring initial in-depth investigation and analysis to understand the role of power relations, local values and other indigenous structures and practices. This study has sought to explore the character and potential of development interventions of a participatory nature in Sudan, and has therefore centered on discussing the elements that influence people's involvement in externally funded projects. However, during the research process, important issues emerged which were not initially intended to be explored in detail, such as the ideologies, roles and capabilities of development providers and facilitators.

In this way, further studies that focus on issues related to the credibility of various development providers and their approaches, the sustainability of development interventions, women's status and the indigenous participatory norms and practices present in different settings, may enhance the depth of our knowledge and provide a framework for comprehensive community development.

By highlighting the role of development agencies, the study has shed light both on their importance and the need for more research in this area. The development providers involved in both case studies claimed that their aim was to empower the targeted communities. However, little evidence affirmed the empowering effect of their interventions, which indicates that further studies are needed to examine this issue. Specifically, more research should be undertaken to review the policies of development providers, their contributions, and how well these fit within local systems.

Women's role in development has attracted much debate. The research participants had different perspectives on what appeared to be a biased approach towards addressing gender issues, which suggests that further in-depth studies of the role and performance of women at community and national levels, as well as of young men's needs, would enrich our knowledge of these contentious aspects.

The consensus of the literature is that community organizations are crucial mechanisms for implementing development interventions. However, the research observations of national NGOs raise doubt regarding the role and reputation of NGOs, and thus their status as trusted and accountable

partners. This implies that further research is required into the role, impact and credibility of local NGOs, which many help to formulate effective development strategies.

It appears that there are few empirical studies that explore indigenous participatory systems, while on the flipside; externally planned approaches are often addressed. Another area for researchers of participatory development to explore is that of indigenous values, structures and practices surrounding participation, and how these can be accommodated into external strategies to enhance future development interventions.

Appendices

Appendix 2.1

Research Participants

<u>Code</u>	<u>Participant</u>	<u>Location/Organisation</u>
BWF-FGD	Former UN Employee	BWA
DO-SSI	Development Officer	UNDP/ Khartoum
FAD-FGD	Female Academic	DSRI/ U.of Khartoum
FA-FGD	Female Academic	EI-Azhari University
FA-SSI	Administrative Officer	I NGO/ Khartoum
GAD-FGD	Gender Specialist	MAF/ Khartoum
FM-SSI	Former Minister	Parliament/ Khartoum
KC-SSI	Key Coordinator	IFAD/ Khartoum
MAI-SSI	Male Academic	DSRI/ U.of Khartoum
MA-SSI	Male Academic	IAAS/ U.of Khartoum
MJ-SSI	Male Journalist	Rayaam Newspaper
SG-SSI	Government Official	Federal Rule Chamber
<u>Case Study One</u>		
FDO-SSI	Former Dev. Officer	WNASP
FGE-FGD	Female Gov. Employee	White Nile State
FE-SSI	Female Extension Worker	WNASP

FFEO-SSI	Female Extension Officer	WNASP
FP-FGD	Female Participant	WNASP
FT-FGD	Female Teacher	White Nile State
IO-SSI	Investment Officer	FCB
LP-FGD	Male Farmer	White Nile State
MF-SSI	Male Farmer	White Nile State
MF-FGD	Male Farmer	White Nile State
MPC- SSI	Village Popular Committee	White Nile State
MP-SSI	Male Participant	White Nile State
PO-SSI	Planning Officer	MFLF/White Nile
SAM-SSI	S. Agricultural Manager	MAAI/ White Nile
SAO-SSI	S. Agricultural Officer	MAAI/White Nile
SGO-SSI	S. Government Officer	White Nile State
SIO-SSI	S. Investment Officer	ABS
SM-SSI	Senior Manager	FNC/ White Nile
SW-SSI	Social Worker	White Nile State
Umda-SSI	Locality Leader	White Nile State
VL- SSI	Village Leader	White Nile State
VNS-SSI	Village Nursery Supervisor	WNASP

Case Study Two

AEX-SSI	Extension Specialist	MAAI
CH-SSI	Chairperson VDO	NKRDP/ Bara 2
FCP-FGD	Female Credit Participant	Bara 2
FFW-FGD	Female Fieldworker	Bara locality

FM-SSI	Female Member	PDW
FNCP-FGD	Female Non-Participant	NKRDP/ Bara 2
FPO-SSI	Former NKRDP Officer	El-Obeid
FVDO-SSI	Female Member of VDO	NKRDP/ Bara 1
FVPC-SSI	Female Member of VPC	NKRDP/ Bara 1
FW-SSI	Fieldworker	NKRDP/ UmRuwaba
IFL-FGD	Influential Village Leader	NKRDP/ UmRuwaba
KD-SSI	A Key Director	MFLF
KM-SSI	Key Member	Hawa Organization,
MFR-FGD	Male Farmer	NK/ UmRuwaba 3
MF-SSI	Male Farmer	NKRDP/UmRuwaba4
MM-SSI	Male Member	PDW
MVDO-FGD	Member of VDO	NKRDP/UmRuwaba4
PVDO-FGD	President of VDO	NKRDP/UmRuwaba4
MV-FGD	Male Villager	NKRDP/UmRuwaba1
MVPC-FGD	Member of VPC	NKRDP/ Bara 1
MW-SSI	Midwife	NKRDP/ Bara-2
NRS-SSI	N. Resources Specialist	NKRDP
PPF-SSI	Poor Female Participant	UmRuwaba 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	UmRuwaba 2
SH-F	Village Sheikh	NKRDP/ Bara 3

SMN-SSI	Senior Manager	NKRDP
SPM-SSI	Program Manager	NKRDP
SPO-SSI	Senior Planning Officer	MFLF/ NKS
SSDO-SSI	Social Development Officer	MESA
ST-FGD	School Teacher	UmRuwaba 3
VL-FGD	Village Leader	Bara 2
YMP-SSI	Young Male Participant	UmRuwaba 1

Appendix 2.2
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 programs in the field of community development or people's participation? If yes, please elaborate: where, for how long, and how this has been useful to your present work?
3. What are the purposes of involving people in the project?
4. What are the project's participatory approaches?
5. Do you have experience with participatory methods? If yes, please explain.
6. Who decided where the work should be done? How was funding arranged?
7. Were there any excluded or marginalized groups? If any, who and why?
8. How does the work start in the villages?
9. Did the project seek local people's contribution in technical matters?

10. Did the project involve the local people in data collection, analysis, record-keeping and reporting?
11. Who set and applied the rules and regulations that governed 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? If any, please explain.
14. Were there any development activities initiated and implemented by the community without the project's intervention or support?
15. Were there any forms of conflict within the community? If any, what were the reasons and mechanisms for resolutions?
16. Did the project manager, senior staff and government officials come to sit with and listen to the local people?
17. How did the project staff interact and share experiences with 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 benefitted the most? If any, why?
2. Who did not benefit? If any, why?
3. Were there any conflicts or tensions as a result of the project? If any, please explain.
4. Were there any changes in the social structure, values, traditions, beliefs, and practices of the community as a result of the project's interventions?

5. Were 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 Organizations take over and manage their own development and community affairs after the withdrawal of the project?
8. How do you see the sustainability of the following interventions after the project stops?

Interventions	Sustainable (Y/N)	How/ Why
Village Development committees		
Informal credit		
Formal credit		
Literacy program		
Agricultural extension		
Natural resources components.		
Service 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. Were 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 become involved in empowering the poor and marginalized?
6. What was the influence of local culture on participatory processes?

Appendix 2.3

Documentation Sheet

Method:

.....

Date

:

.....

Place:

.....

Duration:

.....

Number

of

participants:

.....

Gender:

.....

Position:

.....

Profession:.....

Topic

for

discussion:

.....

Brief summary of interview/ PRA session:

.....

Special notes:

.....

Source: Adapted from Flick, 1996 cited in Flick, 2002:172.

Appendix 5.1

Islamic Banking: Modes of Financing Operations

Islamic banking operates through the following modes of deposit 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, labor, 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 labor. 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 labor will not be compensated for labor, 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 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 collateralized';

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 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 asset's expected life'.

Sources: IMF (1999 cited in Deng, 2000:39-40).

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