The process of involving members of a society either as individuals or groups in planning and implementation of activities affecting their lives has been given different connotations in the literature; among them participatory development (Chambers 1992; Nelson and Wright 1995), participatory governance (Hickey and Mohan 2004), democratic local governance (Blair 2000) or even community development (Dolsak and Ostrom 2003). All these refer to participation of local people in one way or the other in development programmes.

According to Sherry Arnstein (1969:216), participation is a deliberate process that enables, to use her words, the ‘not have citizens’ presently excluded from the political and economic process to be included in the future. According to Arnstein, whose ‘ladder of citizen Participation’ has been widely used in analyzing participation, the underlying issues are the “nobodies” in several arenas trying to become “somebodies” with enough power to make the target institutions responsive to their aspirations, views and needs.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Degrees of Citizen Power</th>
<th>Citizen control</th>
<th>Delegated power</th>
<th>Partnership</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Degrees of Tokenism</td>
<td>Placation</td>
<td>Consultation</td>
<td>Informing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non participatory</td>
<td>Therapy</td>
<td>Manipulation</td>
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To allow for an analytical perspective of the term participation, we borrow from Arnstein’s ladder of participation and Pretty’s (1995) typology of participation. Arnstein’s ladder has eight levels but generally categorised into three. Her bottom two rungs of participation: manipulation and therapy, she argues, are designed to enable the power holders to ‘educate and cure’ the participants, whereas the next three in the ladder: informing, consulting, and placation allow the have not’s to be heard but there is no assurance of changing the status quo. Placation for instance, has clear ground rules that allow have not’s to advise, but refrain for the power holders continued right to decide. This category matches with Pretty’s participation in information giving: participation by consultation and participation for material incentives. Higher in the hierarchy of their levels of participation involves functional
and interactive participation which also includes formation of partnerships and delegated power. Under these levels, participation enables people to engage tradeoffs with power holders and may exhibit a level of control over local decisions, structures or processes.

Both Arnstein and Pretty have a higher level of participation: citizen control and self-mobilization respectively but warn that in reality, difficult circumstances make it almost impossible for citizens to hold full control of local decisions.

Critics of participatory development have labeled it a ‘tyranny’ arguing that participatory approaches have not lived up to the promise of ‘empowerment’ and transformative development for marginal peoples (Cooke and Kothari 2001). Another group of researchers have argued that it is possible for participatory approaches to develop the political capabilities of the poor if they undergo ‘a transformation’ (Hickey and Mohan 2004). They argue that this ‘transformation’ of participatory approaches will require an understanding of the ways in which participation relates to the existing power structures and broadening the participatory agenda to include issues of governance as well as an engagement with wider debates concerning the changing state in relation to the process of democratization and decentralization.

The key to community development is facilitating a community in applying the principles to guide a flexible series of actions that are appropriate for the situation of the community. There are many models and frameworks for community development processes. There is a trade-off between communities having clear future plans for steps in the process and retaining flexibility and versatility. Considerable skill, confidence and judgment is needed to maintain an adaptable community-led process guided by the principles of community development.

While the application of principles in a flexible process is the key, the following sub-section describes a sequence of key steps in a participatory development process. These steps are not prescriptive, but they rather describe the usual stages that most communities go through during a versatile process of community development. Communities may not progress through all the steps and some may occur concurrently.

1. **Community Preparedness**

Communities need to have some of the key ingredients for a development process-motivation, local leadership, a sense of ownership. Not all communities are interested in, or prepared for, undertaking a process of community development. At any one time, only a few communities may see the need, or have people motivated to organize and lead the community in development activities. Communities may have only a couple of the ingredients for success.

2. **“Bubbling” Concerns**

Community development processes develop from a situation where issues and concerns are bubbling around. People are concerned, enthusiastic, motivated, frustrated. Private troubles become public concerns as people share issues that matter to them individually. People may
begin to see some advantage for them in community improvement. They also may have altruistic feelings of contributing to the welfare of the whole community.

3. **Stimulus**

Often, a stimulus brings the bubbling situation to a head. A local crisis, such as a mine closing or business leaving town sparks community action. A local leader, a local community group or several concerned citizens may galvanize community action. Outside input such as a visit by a community facilitator, hearing what another community has done, or a visit by local people to a conference may stimulate action. In prepared communities even an impassioned speech may turn concern to action.

4. **Initial Organization and Involvement**

After a stimulus often the first step is an event that brings the community together usually at a public meeting or forum. At this point, community representatives may invite a facilitator or resource person into the community to help with suggestions, information and the process itself. Some community members may have a clear idea of what is needed or what they want to do. Others may simply want to do something to improve their community but are not sure what.

5. **Engagement and Issues Identification**

After some initial organization, a key step is activities to engage local people and give as diverse range of citizens the opportunity to be involved. Engagement of people occurs throughout a community development process, but it is crucial to actively foster involvement early in the process.

As Mulwa (2004) argues, the participation should be genuine and active, i.e. not only seeks to involve the local people in design and implementation of the projects but more importantly, the process should seek to link the peoples felt needs with the project goals and objectives.

There are several important aspects of engagement. First, it involves understanding the existing concerns of community members. This means identifying what people have passion for, what they feel community issues are, and how interested they are in being involved. Basic questions here are "What are your concerns?", "How would you like your community to be?" Would you like to be involved?

Second, it is important to ask citizens how they would like to participate. In many community efforts local leaders overlook this. They often choose participation opportunities that they are familiar with, often opting for traditional meetings and committees by default. Asking people how they would like to be involved and actively seeking alternative organizational arrangements and events that are fun and social will help people participate. Often this leads to a judgment about how prepared the community is to conduct a development effort, and how people would like to plan the process. It also generates trust, involvement and identifies local champions.

Third, some community members may wish to pursue a particular idea they have passion for, such as a new business, streetscape or a shop local campaign. The process needs to allow these people to get started on acting on the idea even though not everyone may agree or it
may not seem to be a priority. Passion drives community development and a balance must be struck between supporting passionate people and longer term self-examination and prioritization.

Participation in a community development process essentially involves the aspects shown in the illustration below (adapted from Mulwa 2004):

1. Needs identification (needs assessment)
2. Prioritization of own needs (making choices)
3. Action planning (resource identification and allocation)
4. Implementation; who is doing what?
5. Monitoring and evaluation: Is it working right?
7. Sharing benefits or loss: who gets what, how much? who pays for what, how much?

The process is not necessarily linear.
RATIONALE FOR PARTICIPATORY DEVELOPMENT MODELS

Development has for decades been based on the modernisation paradigm. Modernisation is based on economic growth and accumulation of wealth. Other characteristics of the paradigm include (Mulwa 2004):

- Emphasis on high technology as opposed to appropriate and indigenous traditional knowledge
- Emphasis on higher education as opposed to basic education
- Globalisation
- Top down leadership necessary for control and maintenance and control of the status quo
- Coercion of people into development projects

Critiques of the modernisation paradigm of development

According to David Korten, development should value the well-being of the people over economic growth.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Growth centred development</th>
<th>People Oriented development</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Material consumption</td>
<td>Human well-being</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corporate business</td>
<td>Household</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Absentee ownership</td>
<td>Local ownership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Export markets</td>
<td>Local markets</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

He defines development as;

A process by which members of a society increase their personal and institutional capacities to mobilize and manage resources to produce and manage resources and justly distributing improvements in their qualities of life consistent with their aspirations (Korten 1960;67)

Korten’s definition of development is consistent with the principles of participatory development. Other critiques hold that despite a focus on maximization of wealth and years of accumulation; (World Bank statistics, various reports; UNDP Human Development reports) the progress of human development has been less than impressive as shown by the following statistics.

- Over one billion people within developing societies live below the poverty line
- The World wealth is unevenly distributed with Sub-Saharan Africa contributing to just over 2% of the World trade. Consequently, 40% of the population in Africa struggle for existance
- A total of 163 million children were underweight by the start of the new millennium and infant mortality stood at 110 per thousand (UNDP 2001)
Developing countries which mostly produce agricultural commodities have little control of their pricing - most of them being done in international markets, execrating inequality.

This sample of statistics support growing calls for a rethinking and redefinition of development, with a more objective reassessment of social priorities and goals. As Chitere 1994 argues, while resources are often invested in development programmes, local people often do not appreciate these programmes and are not involved in their implementation. He further argues that community development has a potential to provide a solution to the low level of participation of people in development programmes.

**Principles of participatory development**

There is no “recipe” for a process of community development. Rather, a set of key principles guide a flexible process of engagement and action as follows: Start where rural people are – the existing concerns and situation of people is the starting point of community development. Following on from Mulwa (1994) a principle is a fundamental doctrine or truth from which policies, decisions and actions are derived.

- **Principle of human orientation** - that community development projects should be out to alleviate poverty and suffering through meeting peoples’ basic needs. Besides basic needs, they also have abstract needs e.g happiness, self-esteem and self-reliance.
- **The principle of participation** (do it yourselves, in your own way) - People should of necessity, participate in decisions that affect their lives. The community makes and implements decisions and the community’s initiative and leadership is the source of change. Participation is defined by Bhatnagar and Williams (1992, cited in Mulwa 2004: 96) as
  
  o “a process by which the people, especially the disadvantaged, influence decisions that affect them…participation means influence on development decisions, not simply involvement in their implementation, or (in sharing) benefits of development activity, although those types of involvement are important and are often encouraged by opportunities for influence”

  People build motivation and community capacity through participation and active involvement in decision-making and implementation. It is about creating an environment

- **The principle of ownership** - the ability of people to own the process and results of what they do, and also to own up responsibility over the same, whether for better or for worse ( Mulwa, 2004). Community development creates a vehicle for people to act on existing concerns, the passion and enthusiasm of local people drives action. Belief, motivation and commitment are the “fuel in the tank” of community development.

- **The principle of empowerment** - According to Chambers (1993) empowerment enables the poor and powerless to take more control over their own lives. At the centre of all definitions of community development is the idea that it has the capacity to develop a voice for the voiceless; that those who experience isolation from the political process can be brought right into it and enabled to participate effectively in the democratic process. It is this idea that creates the impetus to achieve social change and to fight against poverty and social exclusion ( Lee 2006). Empowerment is a process characterised with;
o Marshalling of locally available resources
o Building on relationships among people through social, kinship, or associational networks
o Recognition that strengths, gifts, talents of individuals and communities are more likely to inspire positive action for change than an exclusive focus on their needs and problems
o Equipping people with correct information on which basis they plan to

- Similarly, Perkin’s work (2003, cited in Rubin and Rubin 2007: 390) seems to sum up the essence of empowerment in community development. They observe, “The motto of community development in the 1960s could have been this; give people fish and they’ll eat for a day”. The 1970s motto could have been, teach people how to fish and they’ll eat for a life time”…The 1990s (and beyond) approach to development needs to ask the question, who owns the pond?”
- Principle of adaptiveness-it requires a change of mind set and a willingness to learn as you go along. This is the opposite of blue print planning which is precise, rigid and inflexible.
- Inclusiveness – all citizens should be given an equal opportunity to be involved. Effort is required to encourage diverse sectors of the community to participate.
- Principle of learning- community development should draw on the insights of all those who are concerned as we search for solutions. As rightly argued by Chambers (1997:31), not even the so called experts know it all- often they are wrong. Ironically, argues Chambers, experts who are often wrong are these with long education and training,. Their very power conditioned their perceptions and prevented them from learning ( ibid: 1999, 32).
- External facilitators and resource people are “invited in” to work with rural people, rather than working for them, or delivering services to them. They have a responsibility to challenge and suggest, but not make or influence community decision-making,
- Development activities foster leadership, entrepreneurship and altruism, the existing capacity of people and their community need to be recognised and appreciated as well as creating opportunities for them to build their capacity,
- A holistic approach is used building economic, human, social and environmental aspects of community as an interrelated whole,

Rethinking
One crucial principle is “rethinking” development fundamentally relies on creating new options by reconsidering issues and problems with new assumptions. For example, if you think of “export” from the community as the physical transfer of cattle, wheat or other products in return for money, only a few options for building exports appear, such as improved commodity prices. However, if you think of “export” as activities that bring money into a community a new range of alternatives become available such as tourism, education, government, and transport stops as export activities. Development plans can be put in place to bolster these export activities.

Rethinking helps communities redefine assets. For example, in the small rural town of Jasper, Arkansas, USA, local people redefined elderly residents, not as dependents, but as community assets with experience and unique knowledge of local history, music and crafts. They act as hosts for a thriving community-run tourist venture (Newton County Resource
Council, unpublished). Rethinking also debunks local “myths”. Some communities have examined their own economy or swapped with a neighbouring town to examine each other’s economy and assets. The results have forced people to rethink beliefs taken for granted in the past. For example, a common attitude in many country towns is “there are no jobs”. However, some communities have found that employers are looking for workers but can’t find people with appropriate skills, or poor housing discourages workers to stay. The employment issue therefore involves skills and housing, not just lack of jobs.

Rethinking creates new options. For example, many communities despairing at the migration of youth, put effort into activities to retain local young people. However, few communities deliberately attempt to attract young people who had left the community some years before, back to the community as adults with families wishing to settle.

**Ingredients**
The key elements or ingredients for successful community development are:

- A slight level of dissatisfaction – motivation and enthusiasm based on a feeling that “things could be better”.
- Belief and expectation of self-help – a belief in the future of the community and a conviction that realising that future depends on the action of community members
- Local Leadership – committed formal and informal leaders that can enthuse and support others, foster “shared leadership”, accept criticism, and act as local champions for community development efforts.
- Collaboration – a strong culture of cooperation and participation
- Willingness to experiment and take advantage of opportunities
- Cultivate Allies – actively seek, inform, and network with outside supporters
- Work hard and stay with the process, especially when there is a setback.

**References**


