Over 1 billion people live in poverty and 70% of these live in the rural areas of developing nations. Practices of international development have flagged community empowerment as a means to alleviate this poverty. Empowerment puts people at the centre of the development process; it implies a participatory approach to development focusing on bottom-up approaches rather than top-down bureaucratic methods.

Empowerment increases the capabilities of the poor to influence and hold accountable the institutions that provide for them. To this end, empowerment attempts to give power and knowledge to rural communities to assist in creating a better quality of life, so that in the future they will have the skills to rely less on external forces to provide vital services and infrastructure.

This thesis investigates differences between the practice and ideal of empowerment theory in rural areas of the developing world. The investigation analyses relevant literature on empowerment and participatory approaches, examines several relevant case studies, and includes an in-depth interview with one of the world leaders in the field. Recommendations are made as to the best way to employ community empowerment for rural areas desperately seeking an escape from the poverty trap.

We will spare no effort to free our fellow men, women and children from the abject and dehumanizing conditions of extreme poverty, to which more than a billion of them are currently subjected. We are committed to making the right to development a reality for everyone and to freeing the entire human race from want. (Courtney et all in Godinot and Wodon (ed). 2006. 2)

Statement from the United Nations Millennium Declaration, which was adopted by 146 heads of State in September 2000

Community Development Through Empowerment of the Rural Poor

Duncan Livingstone
Special Thanks

I would like to thank my family for their love, support and kind words. So Robin, Jan, Georgina Jennifer, Holly and Sam thank you very much. A special thanks to my sister Jennifer who helped with design issues, it wouldn’t have been the same without you sis.

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I would also like to thank my close university friends, the dream team, Bianca, Wendy and Mary. Our zest to make the most of each day together made the university experience one to never forget.

This thesis is dedicated to my late Grandfather Maxwell Staunton-Smith. Australia lost a true hero and a great bloke. Your memory will live forever through your family and friends.

Rest in peace Grandpa.
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chapter one introduction
1. Introduction

1.1 Introduction

There has been a great deal of attention given to poverty in developing nations. An evaluation of the methods being employed to address poverty is needed in order to assess the effectiveness of development programs. Of particular interest are post 2000 programs which have increasingly aimed to enhance community empowerment.

International development programs which tackle poverty in this way use bottom up methods which focus on local, small scale interventions to achieve a solution to the greater issue. Basic principles of self help and involvement in the development process by the local community are used to achieve better project outcomes. Participation by the local community in as many aspects of the development process as possible is critical so that development projects can be planned, implemented and maintained for the long term in a sustainable way.

There is often a big difference between the theory of community empowerment and its implementation in practice. Initiatives are sometimes thwarted in the complex social structures of the community itself which can combine in an adverse way with the professional and organisational structures of the agencies initiating the development project.

This thesis focuses on the rural areas of developing nations and the ways in which development agencies address poverty reduction, community empowerment and participatory development. The nature and content of the research will best be of benefit to academics who work in international development, non-government organisations involved in empowerment and participatory projects and aid agencies in Australia and abroad.
1.2 Problem Setting

Rural areas in developing countries experience large problems associated with access to basic amenities and services. Attempts to resolve this situation involve development programs using community empowerment in rural areas of developing nations to ameliorate instances of poverty. The research in this thesis will have a strong focus on bottom up initiatives. It involves communities taking an active role in programs that affect their quality of life in partnership with initiatives made by development organisations.

1.2.1 Overview of Main Topic Areas

The topic areas for this thesis are the effectiveness of development programmes that include community empowerment at their centre. My study will examine projects undertaken by The World Bank, The United Nations and other non-government organisations. Other topic areas include the differences between the reality and ideal of community empowerment projects.

1.2.2 Key Areas

Local knowledge of the surrounding areas is often negated by the dominant professional and academic thinking, which, more often than not guides project direction. In this way the people who the project is directed at lose their voice.
Many development programmes include community empowerment in their objectives. Frequently the involvement of the local community is small and essentially tokenistic. Barriers to significant citizen empowerment include the capture of the project by local elites and the bureaucratic structure of organisations involved. This creates adverse impacts on project outcomes.

1.3. Research Questions

The research will attempt to address the following research questions;

1. What are the main concepts involved in community empowerment?
2. What are the impediments to community empowerment and participatory development?
3. What groups need empowerment the most?
4. Are bottom-up projects a better alternative than a top down approach to ameliorate poverty?
5. Does involvement by the community in the development process increase the rural poor’s skills to undertake similar projects in the future?

The research process which is listed in the methodology chapter of this thesis will show methods employed to answer these questions.

1.4. Historical Perspective

Historically development programmes in developing nations have involved provision of basic services through non-government organisations, aid agencies and international bodies such as The World Bank and The United Nations. In the past these organisations distributed project funding to higher authorities, rather than the local level.
Organisations in the past also used western methods and thinking to ameliorate instances of poverty. These methods have not had the desired effect that was intended. Since instances of poverty are growing throughout the world, there seems to be a call for better solutions to the exacerbating problem.

Recent international development practice has endeavoured to make locals become involved in the development process through the concept of empowerment and participation. However, institutions involved in the development process can be guilty of attending to their own objectives rather than tackling genuine community empowerment and participation.

Empowerment and participation entails community involvement in the provision of infrastructure and services so that they have a sense of ownership of the project. It also calls for the reallocation of money from higher levels to the local level to stem the watering down of funds through rigid top down development structures.

This thesis explores empowerment and participation in development and critiques its areas of application in an attempt to improve the problems current status.

1.5. Theoretical Framework

The theoretical and conceptual framework upon which the thesis builds are described below in order to contextualise the research. The literature below was used to gain general knowledge on the topic areas in the initial phases of research and as such the literature used in the next section is not used in the more detailed literature review section.

The wider theoretical framework is based around addressing problems at local levels in rural areas. The topic areas have their roots in a number of theories. These theories and their relevant literature are explained below.
Small scale projects are a solution to larger problems McRobie (1981) argues that can be effective if managed correctly. Small scale projects involve provision of local services and infrastructure. Examples of this include a community health care facility of locally based piped borne water systems.

Similarly Schumacher (1973) shows how small and locally based initiatives are not as difficult to implement as some academic thought suggests. This author adopts a more economic approach. Major development bodies also support small scale empowering projects.

The World Bank supports community empowerment as a means to alleviate poverty this is shown in its publication, *Empowerment and poverty reduction; a source book*. The empowering process needs to be taken on a case by case basis.

Mayo (2000) writes about empowerment in communities and takes the stance that this is achieved through a thorough understanding of how each community is made up culturally. The rural areas of developing nations are especially important as large instances of poverty exist there. Johnson (1992) discusses the quality of life in rural areas and writes about how rural communities in developing nations respond to food and infrastructure crises.

Authors that support the concepts of poverty reduction are Schneider and Havorson-Quevedo. (2002), and Hanley (2002). They canvass issues in poverty reduction using specific strategies and case studies, which are African based.

Community participation is supported by Swallow, (2005) who uses participation case studies to address community priorities in Kenya. Williams and McIlwaine, (2003) are other authors that highlight issues associated with community participation and its relation to poverty alleviation.

The conceptual ideas for the thesis that come out of the theoretical concerns also highlight issues that deal with the credibility of indigenous knowledge. Authors that deal with this notion include Castree, (2004). Briggs, (2005) and Stilltoe, (2002). These authors highlight ways in which indigenous knowledge can empower communities.
The authors above cover the originally researched issues in the initial phases of research. These ideas lead to the formulation of the main topic areas of the thesis, which is to use community empowerment and participation as a means to ameliorate poverty in rural areas of developing nations.

1.6. Thesis Organisation

The following is an overview of the contents of this thesis to assist the reader in grasping the research holistically.

1.5.1 Chapter One- Introduction

The introductory chapter includes the problem areas, the need for the study and the current status of the topic areas. It also includes the theoretical approach from which the thesis was drawn. The introductory chapter's purpose is to stimulate interest and give the reader an idea of where the idea for the thesis originate.

1.5.2 Chapter Two- Rural Areas of the Developing Nations, Poverty, Empowerment and Participatory Development Defined

In this chapter the reader is made aware of the study population and its relationship to the topic areas. Chapter two will highlight the importance of the research by presenting the socioeconomic and demographic trends of rural areas experiencing poverty in developing nations. Chapter two also defines empowerment and participatory theory.
1.5.3 Chapter Three - Methodology

This chapter outlines the research methods. The way the information was gathering is discussed. They include a literature review, a case study analysis and a qualitative in-depth interview. These research methods have to be clearly articulated so that the reader can appreciate how the thesis research questions were answered.

1.5.4 Chapter Four - Literature Review

This chapter brings together the relevant literature. Its purpose is to set the scene of current theories on empowerment and participation, which will address the research questions.

1.5.5 Chapter Five - Case Study Analysis

Chapter five links the theory to practice. The case studies analysed involve participation in development and community empowerment. Advantages of this practice and the areas to be careful in implementation are highlighted in this section.

1.5.6 Chapter Six - Research Findings

The chapter brings together all of the research findings. This includes results from the literature review synthesis, the case study analysis and the results of the qualitative in-depth interview.
1.5.7 Chapter Seven- Recommendations and Conclusions

The recommendations chapter flags areas for action in the practice of development projects in developing nations. The recommendations are the direct result of the findings of the research and the research process.

The conclusions summarise the thesis findings and answer the research questions. This chapter draws the research to a close.

I now turn to explaining some of the finer details of the research, as well as an explanation of the theories that form the foundations of the thesis.
community development through empowerment of the rural poor

Chapter Two

Rural areas of developing nations, poverty, empowerment and participatory development defined
2. Rural Areas of Developing Nations, Poverty, Empowerment and Participatory Development Defined

Many rural areas of developing nations suffer from poverty and a lack of infrastructure and services. The chapter defines rural areas in the developing world, the magnitude of the poverty experienced and the principles behind empowerment and participatory development. This discussion establishes the need for the current study.

2.1. Rural Areas of the Developing World

Of the six billion people in the world, 1.2 billion live below the poverty line (Bale. 2001. 2), seventy percent live in rural areas. The majority of the rural poor reside in developing countries (ODI Document). Those living in rural areas suffer a lower quality of life than urban residents on every quality of life indicator (Bale. 2001. 4).

One billion rural households lack access to safe water (ODI Document). In a world defined by the simple phrase knowledge is power, those in rural areas are at a disadvantage compared to their western brothers and sisters. A lack of knowledge and information about government functions is lacking in rural areas. Without this knowledge the most disadvantaged lack the power to exert pressure on their governments to change their way of life.

The outcomes of pressure are greatly needed if the rural poor are to gain a fair go in the pricing policies of their produce and the allocation of resources and infrastructure(ODI Document). The international community has attempted to address these pressing issues by employing empowerment and participatory development principles as a means of self help.
The rural poor of developing nations have not been neglected by the international community. For many years effective rural development has been an objective of the international development industry. There are many obstacles in these countries to gaining effective outcomes. Some of the cited reasons include, stagnating rural production, environmental degradation and a concentration of poverty in the countryside (Zoomers. 2005. 271). Due to these factors the rural areas of developing nations remain vastly poor and poverty stricken.

The following section defines rural areas in developing countries.

2.1.1. Rural Poor Defined

Rural poor may be defined as follows. First, they usually live in communities containing 5,000-10,000 people, which are separated by scrubland, pastures or farming land. The second characteristic is that they spend most of their time on farming the land (Rural Poverty Report 2000-2001).

The heart of the rural society is the role of women. Women face the competing priorities of running the household, ensuring their children’s survival and a myriad of other multiple tasks. Women suffer the most from poverty due to discrimination in early education, and the long hours they face to make a living and raise a family (Rural Poverty Report 2000-2001). As such a major theme of this thesis is the empowerment of women.

It is now necessary to define the context of poverty in developing countries. This is needed to gain an appreciation of the ways in which empowerment and participatory development can help these people improve their quality of life.
2.2. Poverty Defined

2.2.1. The Three Basic Categories of Poverty

Relative Poverty- This is where household income is below the national average. These households live below a certain standard as experienced by others in their country and are unable to access certain services, which limits future opportunities (Effiong. 2006. 2).

Moderate Poverty- In this situation basic needs are met but households and individuals are barely able to provide for themselves. In this situation there exists very little opportunity to invest in a better future (Effiong. 2006. 2).

Extreme (or absolute) poverty- Households and individuals are unable to meet their basic needs such as food, shelter, clothing and clean water. This is the type of poverty that mostly occurs in the rural areas of developing nations (Effiong. 2006. 2).

Poverty is a problem that transcends nations, religions and gender. Extreme poverty is classified as a disease.

Poverty plays such a central role in most health problems faced by developing countries, in that it has its own designation in the International Classification of Diseases: Z59.5-extreme poverty (Smith. 2005. 2).

This definition of extreme poverty as a disease would be a surprise to many in western nations. Most would be aware that diseases are preventable. It is necessary to investigate what poverty entails so we can gain an understanding of possible cures.
2.2.2. Cures and Consequences

Poverty in its most devastating effect can be seen as hunger (Smith. 2005. 2). Chronic hunger is classified as consuming less than 1700 calories a day and 17% of the world’s population is considered undernourished (Smith. 2005. 2). The world produces more than enough food to feed its population, cures hence lay in equitable access of agricultural produce, basic food stuffs and cattle.

*The good news is that the world can produce more than enough food needed by its people. The problem is how to give the poor enough command over resources to meet their nutrition and other basic needs on a regular basis* (Smith. 2005. 5).

Poverty can also be classified as early death and poor health (Smith. 2005. 2). In 2005 alone 11 million children died from preventable diseases, such as cholera, malaria and Aids (Smith. 2005. 2). Cures here are also in the form of equitable access, in this case medical services.

Poverty affects children and women to greater degrees. There are approximately 180 million children who are under 14 and work in forced labour conditions that endanger their well being both physical and mental. This work can involve prostitution, human trafficking or forced military service (Smith. 2005. 3).

Poverty is also the denial of the right to basic education (Smith. 2005. 3). Statistics shows that 1 in 6 people in the world are illiterate, and more than 100 million children have been unable to attend school due to poverty (Smith. 2005. 3). Poverty is a multidimensional concept that is linked not only to income, but also to the above factors. Empowerment through participation can be seen as cure for the poor to gain command over their resources.
The above sections show the situations that many of the communities in rural areas face. The next section goes on to define some of the solutions that the international development community is attempting to employ.

2.3. Defining Empowerment

An empowering approach to development puts poor people at the centre of development and views them as the most important resource rather than as the problem” (Narayan. 2002. 17).

Empowerment expands the capabilities of the poor to undertake future self help programs through the concept of participation. It is a people orientated approach of making the community involved the whole process rather than one with a focus on processes and systems, which can exclude the community.

Empowerment is a process that helps people have a sense of ownership over a project being implemented in their area. In this way the international development community attempts to improve the poverty situations of developing countries and set up the basis for future self help programs. Empowering communities will help communities in the future to have less reliance on external forces to help them beat poverty.

Empowerment is the expansion of assets and capabilities of poor people to participate in, negotiate with, influence, control, and hold accountable institutions that affect their lives (Narayan. 2002. xviii).

The empowering approach is by no means a new concept. It has been championed by the largest development agency for developing nations The World Bank. The World Bank is a main fund provider for a large amount of development projects around the world, and it has strong goals of fighting poverty with empowerment as a focus.
Today, the Bank’s Strategic Framework identifies empowering poor people to participate in development as one of the two priorities in the fight against poverty (World Bank OED. 2005. xi).

Empowerment is as a technique that can have meaningful outcomes on poverty in developing nations. One of the things that this thesis explores the difference between the reality of this objective and the ideal of empowering approaches.

In the past involving people and using local knowledge was seen as fruitless activity, due to the bureaucratic nature and structure of the organisations involved. There was a lack of belief in the abilities of the people to undertake meaningful participation. Nowadays belief in people to become involved in these projects is slowly increasing.

Empowerment is generally seen as a key for good quality of life, increased human dignity, good governance, pro-poor growth, project effectiveness and improved service delivery (Narayan. 2002. 8.). Strategies to employ empowerment objectives vary as societies have class, ethnicity, religion and gender differences. This makes empowerment successful on case by case basis and best tailored to individual community social structures.

2.4. Defining Citizen Participation

Assisting people to become involved in development projects was introduced to overcome constraints in the public sector (Meshack. 2004. 63). The public sector in developing regions has sometimes not been able to provide services and infrastructure for the rural poor. Participation taps community resources for better development. It attempts to reduce the gap between governments and people (Meshack. 2004. 63).

Participation in development projects is a strong form of empowerment practice. It entails building capacity of the community in so that they can make rational decisions and undertake meaningful input for mutual benefit. It does not necessarily entail the equal sharing of power (Meshack. 2004. 62).
This section gives the reader an idea as to the ways in which people are empowered and the importance of participation. Participation is best suited to small projects and particularly the rural poor.

The participatory movement is primarily concerned with small scale development projects for the rural and urban poor (Brett. 2003. 10).

2.3.1. Types of Citizen Participation

Implementative Participation- This is a top down approach that constitutes the lowest form of participation. Decisions are made at the top and the local community implements it (Meshack. 2004. 63).

Consultative Participation- Decision making is shared between stakeholders, involving consultations and partnerships between stakeholders (Meshack. 2004. 63).

Substantive Participation- This is a process where the entire decision making process is controlled by beneficiaries. It is the highest level of participation as the community assumes full responsibility for the development (Meshack. 2004. 63).

Communities and organisations in rural areas would best benefit from consultative participation with minor elements of substantive participation. In this way the organisation involved will have control of the process and the community feels it has enough of a voice to assume some sense of ownership.

The above definitions of key issues show some of the ways in which poverty in development circles is attempting to be addressed. Empowering and participatory projects are viable ways to address poverty. The effectiveness of this practice will be evaluated as well as the difference between the reality and the ideal of these types of activities.
community development through empowerment of the rural poor

chapter three
methodology
3. Methodology

The methodology of this thesis involves the following research strategies; a literature review, a case study analysis and an in depth interview. The ways in which information has been gathered is provided below.

3.1. Literature Review

The literature review focuses on the issues outlined in the introductory section as well as the research questions. It involves a review of the literature on empowerment and participation in development projects. It also involves a review of The World Bank and United Nations approaches to the topic areas. The sources used include books and journal articles. A very limited number internet sources were also used in the gathering of information.

The literature review highlights issues of importance and forms the backbone of the research. It is through the literature review that relevant case studies were found.

3.2. Case Study Analysis

The case studies come from rural locations in developing nations. They link with the literature in that the case studies use empowerment and participatory approaches to ameliorate instances of poverty.
The case study analysis involved a weighing up of the advantages and impediments of empowering and participatory approaches. The reader can then appreciate the benefits from undertaking such development projects and see what areas need careful consideration. This review will also form the basis for later sections which will recommend ways in which to effectively implement development projects of this nature.

3.3. Qualitative In Depth Interviewing

This type of research gathering ended up being the most arduous part of the research process. I attempted to communicate with organisations such as the Australian Government Department AusAid, World Vision, The Red Cross, CARE Australia, Oxfam International and Outreach International, with little or no response.

The expert chosen for the in depth interview was Dr Eileen Pittaway. Eileen is the Director for the Centre of Refugee Research and a senior lecturer at the University of New South Wales.

Eileen lectures to post graduate students on subjects such as the politics of international aid, international social development and social policy. It was apparent throughout the in depth interview that she was a leading academic and practitioner in the field of providing assistance to developing countries, and implementing empowering approaches to ameliorate instances of poverty.

The interview was face to face and was recorded on audio tape. The researcher was then able to transcribe the interview and qualitatively analyse the transcript. The transcript was then analysed as a means to draw out issues and themes that might have been missed in the literature review or case study analysis.
community development through empowerment of the rural poor

chapter four
literature review
4. Literature Review

This section is gives the reader a sense of the literature reviewed and the ways in which empowerment has been applied across the international development industry. Whilst the international community has flagged the concept of empowerment and participation as a means to alleviate poverty in developing nations, there is a large difference between the reality and ideal of these principles.

4.1. Gaps in the practice and theory of empowerment and participatory principles

This introductory section highlights gaps in empowerment and participatory practice and the way it is implemented. It is necessary to look at the development organisations that undertake these types of projects that are in partnership with the local communities. One problem in application is the lack of accountability that these organisations take if a certain project does not live up to intended outcomes.

A large gap also exists in the literature with regards to the participation the management systems for development projects (Brett. 2003. 2). These management systems for participation to be successful need to be open give the people voice (Brett. 2003. 2).

External agencies have a defined role in this process and they also make the strongest claims for participatory approaches. Unfortunately they limit the process of participation and accountability in that they fail to enable the local people to impose sanctions on them if they fail in their projects (Brett. 2003. 2).
This results in people having less respect for an organisation if it fails to take responsibility for its mistakes. If communities are to be empowered effectively they must be able to hold accountable the institutions which have direct impacts on their daily lives.

4.2. Problems with Aid and Empowerment/Participatory Approaches

This section highlights what the aid community has done to ameliorate poverty in developing nations. It will show that there are some serious failures of the international community to contribute meaningfully to empowerment and participatory approaches. This is due to negative attitudes of professional organisations and a lack of aid allocation by major donors.

Poverty reduction is a prerogative of many nations that provide aid to developing nations. The collective capabilities that are a main driving force of empowerment have not been systematically included in strategies to reduce this poverty (Narayan. 2002. 16). This is a major problem in that empowerment is seen to have meaningful effects on poverty.

It needs to be noted however, that the international development and aid industry have not had the easiest of times in regards to funding and support. In the last 15 years development aid has suffered severe cutbacks (Folke and Nielsen. 2006. 5). The international community has been concerned that aid and development would fail to significantly lift developing nations out of poverty (Folke and Nielsen. 2006. 5). At the United Nations International Monetary Conference of 2002 major donors made pledges to increase their aid and development budgets, the first time in 15 years (Folke and Nielsen. 2006. 5). If countries are not willing to support countries that need help, then the future is bleak. Aid allocations need to increase if meaningful solutions are to occur.
A lack confidence by the international community for the poor to lift themselves out of poverty is apparent. Many academics and development organisations have preconceived views that the poor are complacent in their efforts to break out of poverty.

Poor people are generally less creditworthy, less productive, and maybe even more ignorant than richer and more resourceful people. It is difficult to provide sustainable aid to poor people as well as poor countries where capacity is limited and basic means and infrastructure for planned intervention are nonexistent. But it is a challenge that has to be met (Folke and Nielsen. 2006. 7).

It is hoped that though empowerment and participatory approaches that this challenge can be taken and won.

4.3. Development worthy countries and the participatory approach

The World Bank states that development projects only work well in countries with good governance (Folke and Nielsen. 2006. 8). Good governance is tied to good development in many ways, but the way that this policy is represented in many texts; make it hard for countries without good governance to receive substantial aid allocations or development projects. This is to the detriment of many developing nations as some of these countries are the ones that need help the most. A role of empowerment is to strengthen governance, so there is an ethical conflict in this area.

Another major problem and inconsistency is the problem of recipient ownership of projects. Many donors and providers of development in rural areas of developing nations have goals of an equal partnership with the local residents in many ways but, “he who pays the piper calls the tune” (Folke and Nielsen. 2006. 9). This is another difference between the reality and ideal of empowering and participatory approaches.
There are many gaps in the literature that do not address the above problems; ways to address these gaps will be detailed in the recommendations section of this thesis.

4.4. Empowerment as a means for poverty reduction

The literature entitled *Empowerment and Poverty Reduction: A Sourcebook* is to be used as a guide for World Bank staff who are implementing empowering approaches. This literature is one of the first ports of call for many people researching the topic areas.

4.4.1. The first port of call for empowering approaches from the World Bank

The World Bank recognises that there needs to be both broad based growth at the national level and bottom up approaches, which focus on poor people and their role in the development process to reduce poverty (Narayan. 2002. ix). The World Bank supports the main research question of the thesis in regards to bottom up approaches as a means to empower.

The World Bank uses five empowering approaches in its projects, which are:

- The provision of basic services;
- Improved local governance;
- Improved national governance;
- Pro poor market development, and;
- Access by poor people to justice. (Narayan. 2002. xxi)
The World Bank has a focus on improved governance at all levels, due to the fact that it expects to be repaid for the money that it lends. Its focus on governance however, can negate meaningful empowerment at a very local level which implies goals of decentralisation and more power to the people.

Empowering approaches in World Bank projects need to include 4 key principles which are;

- Access to information;
- Inclusion and participation;
- Accountability, and;
- Local organisational capacity (Narayan. 2002. 18.).

**Access to Information**- Information is a key and knowledge is power. Informed citizens are better equipped to take advantage of opportunities. The relevance of this information is especially important if the poor are to take effective action (Narayan. 2002. 19). The best way to do this is through education.

**Inclusion and Participation**- The empowering approach views people as co-producers with some degree of control over their resources (Narayan. 2002. 19).

**Accountability**- This is a crucial aspect of an empowering approach. When poor people can hold providers accountable, control and power shirts to them (Narayan. 2002. 21).

**Local Organisational Capacity**- This refers to locals being able to work together and to mobilise resources to tackle problems collectively (Narayan. 2002. 21). Many development organisations undervalue the capacity of communities to collectively solve problems (Narayan. 2002. 21). This is an area of empowerment that needs to improve.
The application of these principles has the potential to significantly reduce poverty in rural areas. Together with participation this approach has better results than a top down method.

4.5. Participatory Development

The participation of communities in development projects is a major aspect of an empowering approach. Participation works well at the small scale. Community based organisations if trained correctly can manage and supervise locally based construction and maintenance activities very effectively (Meshack. 2004. 61). There is a fine balance between success and failure of participation in that it needs to be locally based with little input from external forces. Governments and donors can in fact undermine contributions made by the community in that they take over projects and locals lose their sense of ownership (Meshack. 2004. 61).

Participation in development projects does however need outside stakeholders but the community needs to be the one driving the project. An example of the different stakeholders involved in participatory projects is given over the page. As can be seen there are many people who can contribute to a development project.
4.5.1. Benefits of Participation

Participatory approaches began due to the failure of traditional top down methods in the management of development programs (Brett. 2003. 1). The top down approach exposed the poor to low wage jobs, and exploitative market goods (Brett. 2003. 1). Participatory approaches are an attempt to stop these kinds of occurrences.

A main advantage of employing participatory approaches is that it delivers demand driven services (Brett. 2003. 6). A rural community’s involvement in the development process prioritises services that a community really needs.
Participation also increases self esteem and confidence (Brett. 2003. 6). If managed correctly participation is a good way to empower and manage bureaucratic systems (Brett. 2003. 16).

4.5.2. An Example of a Participatory Development Process

The non government organisation Outreach International uses concepts of participation in its development projects. It helps the poor help themselves and develops their capacity to lift themselves out of poverty (Outreach International. 2007). They currently work in 12 nation's world wide in the attempt of achieving these goals (Outreach International. 2007).

Outreach International state that participatory human development is the most effective way to engage people and empower. They employ a nine staged process to achieve this. A diagram is provided below page, as well as an explanation of the nine steps.

Figure Two. The Nine Step Participatory Human Development Process Module (Source. Outreach International. 2007)
Step One: Integration- This step establishes rapport with the community (Outreach International. 2007) Establishing rapport is important for those workers who are not native to the area. This process takes approximately 8 months. The project needs an indigenous facilitator of the project to establish a network (Outreach International. 2007). This goes against many organisations that provide facilitators who are not native to the area.

Step Two: Social Investigation- Involves gathering data about issues in the community. This can be done through surveys, interviews, focus groups and observations (Outreach International. 2007). It in many helps to investigate future sensitive issues and helps in providing vital social information.

Step Three: Problem Identification and Prioritisation- This needs to be carried out by the community, collectively. The community identifies and prioritises issues. The community can then develop their skills of problem management and ingrain a sense of empowerment (Outreach International. 2007).

Step Four: Ground Working- Ground working raises awareness of what the projects will entail. Its goal is to prepare people for the implementation. Many people need to be involved so that future leaders can be identified (Outreach International. 2007).

Step Five: Public Meeting- In the openness of a public meeting people voice issues and gain trust of one another. Meetings get talked about in the community which spreads the work (Outreach International. 2007).

Step Six: Role Playing- Situations are acted out so that people can deal with them more effectively if they occur in the future. This helps people become prepared for consultation with those who are responsible for making decisions (Outreach International. 2007).
Step Seven: Mobilisation/Action- This step involves face to contact between the participants and those who make the decisions. It strengthens relationships between bureaucrats and beneficiaries (Outreach International. 2007). This is the stage where the community helps in implementing the infrastructure or service.

Step Eight: Evaluation- This is an evaluation of the implementation phase to see whether set goals have been achieved. It helps the community improve projects and creates feelings of empowerment and achievement (Outreach International. 2007).

Step Nine: Reflection- Reflection needs to be completed directly after project termination. It assists further action and organisation. The major leaders in the community should undertake this process (Outreach International. 2007).

Outreach Internationals approach to participatory development has a goal of helping the communities help themselves. This concept supports the research in that participation and empowerment increases the rural poor’s ability to undertake projects in the future with less reliance on external forces. In this way they can attempt to ameliorate the poverty situations, through self help.


The United Nations wants to achieve certain goals in terms of poverty reduction by the year 2015. The United Nations *Global Monitoring Report* of 2007 was reviewed to find the present status on the reduction of poverty. The Current status of poverty in the world according to the United Nations in 2007 concerns five areas of action, these are shown below.
• Growth is reducing poverty but not everywhere e.g. Sub Saharan Africa (World Bank GMR. 2007. 3).
• Investing in gender equality and empowerment of women is badly needed and is considered smart economics (World Bank GMR. 2007. 3).
• Staffing by development agencies is critical in development programs and fragile states are failing to keep up with the intended targets for the millennium development goals (World Bank GMR. 2007. 3).
• There are significant decreases in the quality of schooling even though the quantity of schooling is increasing (World Bank GMR. 2007. 3).
• Greater coherence among donors, recipients, countries and international agencies to meaningfully reduce poverty needs to occur (World Bank GMR. 2007. 3).

The Millennium Development Goals were drawn up in 2000 as a set of objectives to be achieved by the year 2015. A table of the goals are provided over the page.
**Goal 1** ERADICATE EXTREME POVERTY AND HUNGER

Target 1 Halve, between 1990 and 2015, the proportion of people whose income is less than $1 a day

Target 2 Halve, between 1990 and 2015, the proportion of people who suffer from hunger

**Goal 2** ACHIEVE UNIVERSAL PRIMARY EDUCATION

Target 3 Ensure that by 2015, children everywhere, boys and girls alike, will be able to complete a full course of primary schooling

**Goal 3** PROMOTE GENDER EQUALITY AND EMPOWER WOMEN

Target 4 Eliminate gender disparity in primary and secondary education, preferably by 2005, and at all levels of education no later than 2015

**Goal 4** REDUCE CHILD MORTALITY

Target 5 Reduce by two-thirds, between 1990 and 2015, the under-five mortality rate

**Goal 5** IMPROVE MATERNAL HEALTH

Target 6 Reduce by three-quarters, between 1990 and 2015, the maternal mortality rate

**Goal 6** COMBAT HIV/ AIDS, MALARIA, AND OTHER DISEASES

Target 7 Have halted by 2015 and begun to reverse the spread of HIV/AIDS

Target 8 Have halted by 2015 and begun to reverse the incidence of malaria and other diseases

**Goal 7** ENSURE ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

Target 9 Integrate the principles of sustainable development into country policies and programs and reverse the loss of environmental resources

Target 10 Halve by 2015 the proportion of people without sustainable access to safe drinking water and basic sanitation

Target 11 Have achieved a significant improvement by 2020 in the lives of at least 100 million slum dwellers

**Goal 8** DEVELOP A GLOBAL PARTNERSHIP FOR DEVELOPMENT

Target 12 Develop further an open, rule-based, predictable, non-discriminatory trading and financial system (including a commitment to good governance, development, and poverty reduction, nationally and internationally)

Target 13 Address the specific needs of the least developed countries (including tariff- and quota free access for exports of the least developed countries; enhanced debt relief for heavily indebted poor countries and cancellation of official bilateral debt; and more generous official development assistance for countries committed to reducing poverty)

Target 14 Address the special needs of landlocked countries and small island developing states (through the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States and the outcome of the 22nd special session of the General Assembly)

Target 15 Deal comprehensively with the debt problems of developing countries through national and international measures to make debt sustainable in the long term

Target 16 In cooperation with developing countries, develop and implement strategies for decent and productive work for youth

Target 17 In cooperation with pharmaceutical companies, provide access to affordable, essential drugs in developing countries

Target 18 In cooperation with the private sector, make available the benefits of new technologies, especially information and communication

Figure Three. Millennium Development Goals (Source. World Bank GMR. 2007. xvii)
Figure Four. Share of people living on less than $1 or $2 a day, and the expected projection in 2015 (Source. World Bank GMR. 2007. 22).

The Global Monitoring Report of 2007 has updated the worlds on achieving the millennium development goals. This update is provided above.

The tables above highlight that areas such as Sub-Saharan Africa desperately need intervention to reach the millennium development goals. Areas such as Latin America and the Caribbean can be said to be stagnating. The development goals can be achieved if rigorous empowerment and participatory development schemes are employed in these regions.
4.7. United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs- Decentralisation as a means to empower

The United Nations is the prime humanitarian organisation in the world. There are many branches of the United Nations that undertake empowerment. One such branch is the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA). UNDESA advises countries on how to implement the outcomes of United Nations summits. They also help build national capacities (2005. United Nations Publication. 4).

A crucial component of empowering the poor involves the decentralisation of local governments, which leads to local government empowerment (2005. United Nations Publication. 4). Local governments engaging in constructive dialogue with civil society is needed to gauge where development is needed most (2005. United Nations Publication. 5). Strengthening the role of local government through decentralisation as a means of alleviating poverty is highlighted both by the United Nations and The World Bank.

UNDESA evaluations of projects in Africa have found that many communities are unhappy with decentralisation programs due to the weak and substandard aspects of empowering and participatory aspects (Kastciaouni. 2005 in United Nations Publication. 17). Serious concerns arise when local elites and unfair transfers of power are prevalent. The United Nations is concerned that decentralisation can lead not to a real transfer of power but rather for national politicians to create political power groups at the local level (Kastciaouni. 2005 in United Nations Publication. 13). This capture of the political system by the rural and local elite is a major problem that needs careful monitoring by development organisations who implement empowering projects.
4.8. The World Bank and its thinking on Empowerment/participatory Theory

Benefits and failings

The World Bank is responsible for a range of development programs to developing nations. There is no doubt that the World Bank is aware of the problems faced by the rural poor of the developing world. There is some contention however as to how effective this organisation is in providing meaningful assistance. This next section highlights current thinking by The World Bank on poverty issues, and if they are in some ways contributing meaningful outcomes.

4.8.1. World Bank Problems of Participatory Development

Literature published by The World Bank highlights inconsistencies in its project outcomes and goals. Many publications point to the fact that reaching the poorest of the poor is a large challenge.

Making the rural poor involved in empowerment and participatory programs is hard to achieve due to their social exclusion. The gap between the poor in rural areas and those of their more wealthy countrymen is large and widening (Courtney et al. in Godinot and Wodon (ed). 2006. 3).

Because the rural poor are socially excluded, often development organisations such as the World Bank think of the poor as ignorant and complacent. More often that not they are excluded from participating in projects in a meaningful way, due to pre-existing biased views that they are not worthy, or indeed, have the skills to participate effectively.
A top down approach with weak forms of participation and empowerment as is the case of many World Bank development programs may reinforce the power of the World Bank itself rather than empowering those who need it (Godinot in Godinot and Wodon (ed). 2006. 32). In many projects the researchers working on poverty reduction are more at the centre of the research than the poor themselves (Godinot in Godinot and Wodon (ed). 2006. 33).

This highlights the gap between the reality and ideal of empowerment and participatory development where the poor themselves are considered the centre of the process and the most vital players. It seems that this is not occurring in a large amount of World Bank projects.

External agencies involved in the main processes of empowerment and participatory practices are detrimental to project outcomes regardless of how much academics and practitioners think that their methods and input are more valuable than the communities.

“... the projects which are the most successful in reaching the poorest tend to be based on the aspirations they carry deep inside of them but often have difficulty expressing.” (Courtney et all in Godinot and Wodon (ed). 2006. 8)

The aspirations deep inside the poor can only be brought out by making them the centre of the development process. They have difficulty expressing them due to their exclusion from the rest of their countrymen. If these projects are to be successful the members of organisations such as The World Bank need to respect that these people are the most knowledgeable about their problems, and can make the most in roads their solutions.
4.8.2. The World Bank organisational structure and its hindrance to empowerment and participation

The structure and cultures of the various organisations in the application of empowerment programs have significant effects on the achievement of empowerment objectives (Bebbington et al. 2007. 599). This section poses some serious questions as to how effective the World Bank is in its application of empowerment and participatory theory.

The inner workings of The World Bank are understudied (Bebbington et al. 2007. 599). Literature on the Bank focuses on why Bank funded projects have the effects they have but it is unclear the ways in which the projects lead to specific outcomes (Bebbington et al. 2007. 599). The lack of study of inner workings of this organisation is a large concern when trying to find ways to properly apply the theory. More studies need to occur as to how the organisation of The World Bank affects project outcomes.

Deeply rooted professional cultures within organisations reduce everyday commitment on the ground to implement empowerment objectives (Bebbington et al. 2007. 615). A major problem is objectives getting lost in the bureaucratic chain. Empowerment as a concept goes against entrenched values and powers in most of the organisations where empowerment is implemented (Bebbington et al. 2007. 617).

"Understanding better the ways that countertendencies and subcultures can emerge and grow within these organisational and institutional contexts is thus a critical task: for theory and for practice" (Bebbington et al. 2007. 617).

In order to understand how to effectively implement projects, an analysis of the structure of the organisation involved must occur. In this way organisations can see their influence on project outcomes. Organisations need to undertake empowerment and participatory...
projects with an overarching goal of being unbiased and having the faith that the community are in fact the most important players in the process. In this way projects can be seen to be more than facades of empowerment and participation.

Empowerment often goes against the social constructs of many developing nations, where it occurs. An example of this is the empowerment of women in patriarchal societies. Empowerment is not only a logistical matter but also needs to be explained in such a way that the mindsets of people can be directed to achieve meaningful outcomes. This is even more important if the concept can be seen as a controversial juxtaposition to entrenched social and organisational values.

The World Bank has a long way to go to effectively implement its empowerment objectives on the ground. The same is the case for the United Nations and other non government organisations.
4.9. Women and their Importance in the Development Process

Women are one of the most important groups to provide effective empowering objectives. Gender inequalities and discrimination curtail the economic contribution of half of the population (Narayan, 2002, 6.). It is important that all empowering projects have defined objectives to empower women. Empowering women through education in the rural areas of developing nations is the best way to achieve long term benefits.

The valuable resources of women are underutilised in many rural regions of the world, as development programs are taken over by the male rural elite. A later case study will show the effective contribution that women can make in the development process. The glaring overview of many development projects to empower women denies the community the right to achieve equality of participation development programs.

Involving women in development processes is a major way to reduce poverty, as shown in the following flow chart from the United Nations.
Figure Five. Pathways from increased gender equality to poverty reduction and growth (Source. World Bank GMR. 2007. 9).

Increasing gender equality improves the well being of children, reduces poverty and increases economic growth. Economic growth occurs through women being more active in the market place. Future empowerment and participatory approaches need to recognise the invaluable role women play in the development process.

4.10. A Different Perspective: Can the State play more of a role?

Much of the literature has focused on the role that communities can play in their own development projects. There has been no analysis of the role that the state can play in the provision of infrastructure and services that in all fairness they should be providing in the first place. The focus of this section is to emphasise that although communities can undertake self help projects through empowerment, at some stage the government or state needs to help.

The key to the relationship between local communities and the state needs to be reinforced with state-community synergies in community driven development. Governments can do many things to tap the resources of the community. They can attempt to expand non-crop sources of income and bring about land reforms to strengthen the ability of the poor to lift them out of poverty (Gupta et al. 2004. 27).

The major problem of empowerment and participatory projects facing power imbalances and local rural elites often thwarts collective action (Gupta et al. 2004. 28).

In such settings, higher levels of government may actually be better placed to help the disadvantaged than local agencies influenced by local vested interest (Gupta et al. 2004. 28).
If the state can provide institutional support as well as the infrastructure necessary for rural populations it can act as a trigger for local development initiatives with empowerment and participatory objectives. (Gupta et al. 2004. 34)

... it is crucial for politicians to understand that this is a ‘win win’ strategy for them and their citizenry... (Gupta et al. 2004. 48).

This process of the state becoming involved in local development matters has its merits, in that the community may no longer need to rely on their own devices to bring themselves out of poverty. This needs to be balanced with the state encouraging community empowerment and participatory projects. Governments can be strengthened in this process with substantive political payoffs. Politicians can be seen in a light of cooperation with the local community and hence can base their electoral strategies around the fact that they are encouraging community empowerment. (Gupta et al. 2004. 4)

In these ways the state can at least support the concept of community empowerment at the local level. If these projects are to be successful they have to be backed by the national or provincial governments if not financially then morally.
5 Case Study Analysis

This chapter shows the reader how the theory of participation and empowerment is practiced. The case studies will show the advantages of implementing such strategies and also impediments to the objectives.

The case studies were found from the review of the literature. They are examples of projects undertaken in the rural areas of developing nations. The analysis of case studies is an important part of the research process, in that it allows for the objectives of the theory to be analysed against actual practice.

These case studies represent projects that had empowerment and participation as objectives. They are from Africa and Asia, as these are the areas that experience large amounts of rural poverty. The case studies show areas of success and failure which will allow an analysis of the difference between reality and ideal.

5.1. An Integrated Rural Development Program in Bangladesh

The Bangladesh program is a case study that critiques the benefits and failings of a development project with a focus on the rural poor. This project was studied 9 years after the project was completed.

The project was conducted from the late 1970s till the early 1990s. Its title is an ‘Integrated Rural Development Project’ (IRDP), this project concept and name were subsequently used by many other countries.
This IRDP has four components.

- “A thana/upazilla (subdistrict) training and development centre
- A rural works program (physical infrastructure)
- A thana/upazilla irrigation plan
- A two tier cooperative system consisting of farmers’ cooperatives (Krishak Samobay Samities, KSS) and a Thana/Upazilla Central Cooperative System (TCCA of UCCA)” (Folke in Folke and Nielsen. 2006. 154)

5.1.1. Project Context

The projects location was in the Noakhali region of Bangladesh which is one of the poorest in the country. Noakhali is characterised by serious differences in quality of life, some fertile agricultural lands and a significant male elite (Folke in Folke and Nielsen. 2006. 156). The northern region is made of fertile alluvial plains but is very densely populated (Folke in Folke and Nielsen. 2006. 156). The south is made up of ‘Char Lands’ consisting of sediment from the large river delta which enlarges the coast line. In the last 60 years the coast line has extended 50km because of this phenomenon (Folke in Folke and Nielsen. 2006. 156). This area has mainly been settled by the landless, which have been victims of flooding in other areas of the country (Folke in Folke and Nielsen. 2006. 156).

5.1.2. Project Components

One component was the provision of physical infrastructure, in particular road construction. An element of this initiative was the successful creation of women road maintenance groups (Folke in Folke and Nielsen. 2006. 158).
These groups of poor and destitute women not only got a lasting job (for about seven years), they were also given functional literacy training. Such untraditional occupation of destitute women coupled with education, breaking with established norms in Bangladesh, has clearly attacked poverty where it is most needed (Folke in Folke and Nielsen. 2006. 158).

The creation of a women based road maintenance programs is a perfect example of how to empower women in the development process.

Another component was the provision of irrigation. This is one aspect of the project that was less successful than others. Reasons were mainly to do with unrealistic assumptions, a lack of planning and corruption. (Folke in Folke and Nielsen. 2006. 159). The project did however succeed in constructing almost 200 minor canals, but these canals only contributed marginally to increasing production (Folke in Folke and Nielsen. 2006. 159).

The project also established cooperatives for poor men and women. This involved the formation of special cooperatives for people classified as without assets (Folke in Folke and Nielsen. 2006. 161). These cooperatives have benefited over 45,000 people, which has paved the way for more cooperatives in the region. Special cooperatives of poor groups are good ways for them to undertake collective action.

The mass education program of the project benefited over 250,000 people and focused on a combination of literacy, numeracy, social awareness and issues related to livelihood (Folke in Folke and Nielsen. 2006. 162). It was successful in reaching its target population, mainly the very poor and children. Almost 90% of these children went on to some form of formal schooling and many continued into tertiary education (Folke in Folke and Nielsen. 2006. 163).
5.1.3. The ideal and the reality- success and failure

Although the IRDP did not complete its third phase there were areas of success. Economic growth in the region increased as did infrastructure (Folke in Folke and Nielsen. 2006. 164). It is estimated that approximately 400,000 people benefited from the project (Folke in Folke and Nielsen. 2006. 165).

...in addition to the direct outcome of training, credit, and other programs, many have gained more self-confidence and respect and are less susceptible to exploitation and cheating. (Folke in Folke and Nielsen. 2006. 165).

The program also positively benefited women, as today there are numerous female cooperatives (Folke in Folke and Nielsen. 2006. 166). Poor people are now better off than they were 20 years ago.

Despite all of the projects efforts the villages are still poor and the region is still one of the poorest in Bangladesh (Folke in Folke and Nielsen. 2006. 165).

Although the project was successful in empowering women, they are still at a disadvantage in a male dominated society. Ninety percent of road users are male (Folke in Folke and Nielsen. 2006. 166). Although the poor are better off than they were 20 years ago, this impact has not been dramatic (Folke in Folke and Nielsen. 2006. 167).

The rural power structure remains in place and the poor remain at the bottom in terms of both material conditions and influence (Folke in Folke and Nielsen. 2006. 166).
This rural development project although not having major impacts on poverty did educate a vast amount of the population. It also gave a voice and a sense of empowerment to women in the road maintenance component. Projects in rural areas which involve participation help in the alleviation of poverty, albeit in this case on a small scale. Perhaps if the project was able to run its full course the outcomes would have been more significant.

5.2. Community Participation in the Supply of Water: Bonadikombo, Limbe (Cameroon)

Bonadikombo, Limbe is a strong example of community participation in a public works program in a rural area of a developing nation. The case study will show how the community participated in terms of financial contributions, provision of labour and participation in the consultation process. This case study will show the benefits of such an approach and some impediments to better outcomes.

5.2.1. Project Setting
The setting is a village called Bonadikombo, it is approximately 2km long and 1km wide (Njoh. 2003. 89). It is a village well known for its indigenous population, the ‘Bakwerian’ tribe. The village has a population of approximately 5,000 (Njoh. 2003. 90).

5.2.2. The Project’s Particulars

The project was initiated by the community, which increased ownership of the project from conception. At a local council meeting in 1969 a decision was made to embark on a self help water supply project for the village (Njoh. 2003. 90). The total coast of the project was Nine million Cameroonian Francs (CFA) (Njoh. 2003. 90). It commenced in 1973 and was completed in 1981.

In 1974 due to a shortage of funds, it was suspended for 15 months (Njoh. 2003. 91-92). The contributions of different organisations involved and the resident’s are show below. This is a list of contributors as of 1978.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Contributor</th>
<th>Amount CFA</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bread for the World</td>
<td>2,452,195</td>
<td>22.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Development Department</td>
<td>3,400,000</td>
<td>31.54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SATA</td>
<td>2,107,500</td>
<td>19.55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special Swiss Government Grant</td>
<td>1,728,960</td>
<td>16.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNICEF</td>
<td>445,000</td>
<td>4.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local Residents</td>
<td>646,000</td>
<td>5.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>10,779,655</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.00</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure Seven. Financial Contributions as of 1978 (Source. Njoh. 2003. 92).
Technical details of the project involved supplying water through a natural elevated spring which was located 8km North West of the village. This spring flows to a concrete sedimentation tank that filters out sediment and plant material. The water is then piped to an interruption chamber which in turn goes to a reservoir. From this reservoir the water is distributed to public stand pipes, and a few private residences (Njoh. 2003. 92). Upon the projects completion there were 25 public stand pipes and 8 were equipped with laundry platforms (Njoh. 2003. 92).

5.2.3. Public Participation in the Project

The project was initiated by political leaders in the village and the community was organised on the basis of political cells as opposed to tribal affiliation (Njoh. 2003. 93). Each of these cells was given specific manual tasks. Males contributed 2,500 CFA and women 1,300 CFA (Njoh. 2003. 93). Men were given jobs such as digging trenches, whilst women were in charge of assembling of materials (Njoh. 2003. 93). Key decisions were not made by the residents themselves and participation was limited to weaker forms (Njoh. 2003. 94). Ways in which the community contributed is discussed below.

**Contributions** - Financial contributions although classified as a weak form of participation do constitute an economically efficient use of otherwise underused labour, resources and talent (Njoh. 2003. 95). By contributing residents increased their sense of ownership over the project, which would not have happened if the project was funded completely externally (Njoh. 2003. 95).
Enlistment- Members of the community were enlisted through volunteering (Njoh. 2003. 95). Political leaders served as project coordinators, through collecting contributions and assigning project manual work (Njoh. 2003. 96). The mobilisation of the community would have been more difficult to achieve if the leaders did not act as volunteers (Njoh. 2003. 96). Once these volunteers are organised they tend to act as catalysts for other future community development projects (Njoh. 2003. 96). This case study highlights that participatory and empowering projects can enhance the skills of the population to undertake future similar projects.

Cooperation- The water source was located in a nearby village (Njoh. 2003. 96). If this village did not cooperate the project would have failed.

Consultation- Town Hall meetings and the interviewing of local leaders is how the consultation process was undertaken (Njoh. 2003. 97). Consultation helped in the finding of the appropriate area to pipe the water from. This was an otherwise obscure and remote spring that might have been over looked (Njoh. 2003. 97).

5.2.4. Impediments to Participation in the Project

Impediments occurred through the paternalistic nature of the authority's involvement. (Njoh. 2003. 99) Agents of the state played critical roles in the decision making aspects of the projects, which inhibited the meaningful participation of local residents (Njoh. 2003. 99). As a result there was little funding of the project from authorities due to a lack of knowledge of the area and its needs (Njoh. 2003. 99).

Selective participation in the project meant that those who participated were mainly politicians and bureaucrats. Women and young people were largely excluded (Njoh. 2003. 100-101). This is a major problem due to the fact that women and children will be the main users of these facilities.
The project had a focus on hard issues such as technology, finance and physical resources. This led to decreased interest in softer issues such as decision making procedures, community empowerment and participation (Njoh. 2003. 101).

For instance, while authorities in the Bonadikombo water project were quick to solicit financial and labour inputs from local residents, they made hardly any attempt to enlist the participation of residents in other aspects of the project (Njoh. 2003. 101).

Gate keeping by local leaders was another impediment (Njoh. 2003. 101). Participation was limited to interaction between local residents and their leaders who reported to higher authorities (Njoh. 2003. 101). Residents would have better been served if they had more direct contact with those involved in decision making procedures.

Bonadikombo, Limbe shows some of the strengths of the participatory process, but it also show ways that it can be impeded. Development practioners need to realise that the participatory aspect of a development strategies does more than simply facilitate the implementation of projects; it helps facilitate the development process in general (Njoh. 2003. 102). Meaningful participation and empowerment in the development process could have contributed to more meaningful project outcomes.
5.3. The Community Self Help Project of Kumbo Cameroon

The following case study is the most interesting one canvassed in the research process; once again the case study is situated in Cameroon. The community flagged the issue of pipe borne water as a major issue in the community. They participated significantly in the project, however, when the government department that was in charge of maintenance failed to adequately maintain it the residents reacted in a revolutionary self help initiative. This example is not given to show the incompetence of the Cameroonian government, but rather to show the meaningful input local residents can have if they are empowered and participate in the development process.

5.3.1. Project Setting

Kumbo is located in the west of Cameroon. Its major town is Nso Fondom and it has estimated population of 40,000 (Njoh. 2006, 386). The projects location shown is below.
5.3.2. The Project’s Initiation and Funding

Kumbo historically had to rely on water from spring sources (Njoh. 2006. 388). After many calls from the local community to undertake a development project, the government decided to put some money forward to help in the development of a piped water source. The Government of West Cameroon first earmarked 5 million CFA to the project. This was a meagre amount considering the project ended up having a cost of 572 million CFA (Njoh. 2006. 388). Details of project funding is provided below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Contribution (CFA)</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Canadian Government</td>
<td>420,000,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Federal Republic of Cameroon</td>
<td>60,000,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State of West Cameroon</td>
<td>12,000,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Residents of Kumbo (labour input)</td>
<td>80,000,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure Nine. Major Sources of Funding for the Kumbo Water Project (Source. Njoh. 2006. 389).

The residents of Kumbo contributed a significant amount to the project both financially and physically. They actually contributed more than the provincial and national government combined, which could explain the events that occurred later on.
5.3.3. Projects Implementation

The men in Kumbo contributed 1,500 CFA and the woman 1,000 CFA, construction started in 1971 and was completed in 1973 (Njoh. 2006. 389). Another major issue was that the source of the water catchment had a village in it, namely, Yeh village. This village had to be demolished, the residents had to be forcefully removed and it gained wide media exposure in Cameroon (Njoh. 2006. 389-390).

5.3.4. A Hostile Takeover

Problems arose in the project when the community became unsatisfied with the maintenance of the water system. The National Water Corporation (SNEC) took over maintenance of the water system in 1983 (Njoh. 2006. 391). Residents showed discontent with this organisation claiming that they charged too much for the water source and had a poor maintenance record (Njoh. 2006. 391). Discontent peaked when a dead horse was found in one of the holding tanks (Njoh. 2006. 391). In spring of 1991 residents took to the streets on mass. 6 people were shot dead by government forces, and SNEC's head office building was burnt down (Njoh. 2006. 391).

Water flow had ceased due to contamination, so in April of 1991 residents fixed the water system and reopened 64 public standpipes (Njoh. 2006. 391). Residents then demanded control of the water system and the government eventually complied with their requests (Njoh. 2006. 391). Local leadership took control of water maintenance from 1990 til 1994 and formed a committee called the Kumbo Water Authority. The maintenance of the water was delegated to each residential area around the standpipes.
5.3.5. Community Participation

After the take over of the water scheme by local residents, the citizens of Kumbo became involved in the day to day maintenance of the system (Njoh. 2006. 392). 68 committees were formed to maintain the 68 standpipes. These committees were headed each by their own president. The president organised the maintenance of his or her standpipe together with the local residents that use it (Njoh. 2006. 392). This empowering exercise was the direct result of the sense of ownership that the residents felt due to their participation in the project from its conception.

5.3.6. Why the Project Was Successful

The main goal of supplying pipe borne water was achieved. When the residents became frustrated with the maintenance of the water system they took control of it, hence a sub goal of correct maintenance was also achieved (Njoh. 2006. 393).

It was also successful because there was a minimum level of uncertainty. Residents knew that the problem was water supply so the solution, pipe borne water was easy to identify (Njoh. 2006. 396). Because the problems solution was known early on, the scarce resources that were available were effectively directed (Njoh. 2006. 396).
The role of the citizens and their participation was indispensable. The community’s actions can be viewed as a protest of the inefficient maintenance of the project which is why they ended up taking control. The residents were aware of the government’s limitations (Njoh. 2006. 397). In terms of financial contribution the residents contributed more than the government. Without community participation it is doubtful the project would have been as successful. The Canadian Government’s financial contribution also contributed greatly to the projects success.

Community Cohesion was the key in this project. Their sense of ownership of the project showed unity and vision (Njoh. 2006. 398). They planned and executed a water supply scheme, they contributed in cash and they had a combined view to oust the unsatisfactory SNEC department. They also came together to manage the scheme subsequent to SNEC’s departure (Njoh. 2006. 398).

Such control, which derives from ‘a sense of ownership’, constitutes the strongest form of community or citizen participation there is (Njoh. 2006. 402).

Kumbo, Cameroon shows the advantages that participation can have in the development process. It also shows that participation can help in a sense of ownership. This sense of ownership means that people care about the outcome and contribute to a project’s success. The participation led to the community taking care of their own water source, independent of a government that obviously could not provide the service to a level of satisfaction. This highlights the importance of participation and empowerment as a means to improve a skill base for communities to ameliorate instances of poverty.
5.4. Community Participation in a Public Works Programme in South Africa

One of South Africa’s largest problems is unemployment. Thirty percent of working age South African’s are unemployed and for those poorest Twenty percent of households this rate is Fifty Three percent (Adato and Haddad. 2002. 2). In 1993 as an attempt to solve this problem the South African Government set up 7 public works programs in the Western Cape Province. This program embraced participatory and sustainable development (Adato and Haddad. 2002. 2).

The objectives of the projects are listed below;

- To maintain physical assets that serves the basic needs of the poor through broad economic activity; (Adato and Haddad. 2002. 3)
- Decrease unemployment through more jobs;(Adato and Haddad. 2002. 3)
- “Educate and train those on the programme as a means of economic empowerment”; (Adato and Haddad. 2002. 3)
- Build the capacity of communities to manage their own affairs (Adato and Haddad. 2002. 3).

Community based organisations are not a new concept in South Africa; they have their roots in the apartheid system, where various groups in black communities resisted the government and provided alternative services to their townships (Adato and Haddad. 2002. 6). The community based public works program advocates community control over development.

... the community should control all processes leading to the ultimate establishment of the asset... this means that the community, through its representative community structure, should make the decisions about what should be constructed, how it should be designed and constructed, who should work on the project, as well as the rates and system of employment (Adato and Haddad. 2002. 6-7).
5.4.1. The Particulars of the Project

Areas that received public works were targeted by their level of poverty (Adato and Haddad. 2002. 17) Targeted areas were given projects to improve public infrastructure. Jobs were allocated to the local community.

The program had a policy of paying workers below market wages, so that only the poorest of the poor would apply. Seventy nine percent of all the projects set wages below the minimum rate and due to the strength of the trade union movement; changing union won labour standards ended up being difficult (Adato and Haddad. 2002. 21).

Thirty nine out of one hundred and one projects had strikes or labour disputes (Adato and Haddad. 2002. 23). A major finding of the project was that community based organisations running projects result in lower wages. Projects with real community participation had lower wages than those that did not (Adato and Haddad. 2002. 24).

This is consistent in logic with other studies that have shown that communities in control of funds keep costs low in order to increase the assets that could be built. Where community members stand to benefit from the savings, there is an incentive to spend less on wages (Adato and Haddad. 2002. 24).

An important finding of the research is that by involving the community governments can actually keep costs down.
Community based organisations played the role of employer in 90% of projects (Adato and Haddad. 2002. 25). Bringing the community into the process of helping with the allocation of jobs creates more equality in the process. Community members preferred the allocation of jobs through a process of pulling names out of a hat rather than targeting the poorest (Adato and Haddad. 2002. 26).

Communities selecting workers has a two fold benefit. One is an educational element by learning through doing (Adato and Haddad. 2002. 28). Another is that it requires people to think through issues involved in the allocation of scarce community resources (Adato and Haddad. 2002. 28). This gives communities the skills in the future to work out future problems without external help.

The project was less successful in empowering women. Women were left out of the process and were given insufficient priority (Adato and Haddad. 2002. 29). This was to do with the fact that there was a general view by men that women were unable to tasks classified as ‘men’s work’. This proved to be unfounded, as supported by these insightful quotes.

In five of the case studies, comments were made that women work well- and in some cases better than the men (Adato and Haddad. 2002. 30).

The following are comments from two anonymous employers in the public works programme.
Most of the women they know how to do the men’s job... you will not struggle and think they are ladies they can’t push the wheelbarrow, they can’t plant a garden, no. I would even select more women that men (Adato and Haddad. 2002. 30).

If they.. train the women like they trained us, there’s no difference between a man and a women” (Adato and Haddad. 2002. 30).

Women are the group that needs the most amount of empowerment in the rural areas of developing nations. By leaving them out of the process, you fail to capitalise on the resources of 50% of the population.

5.4.3. Project Outcomes and lessons learnt

The findings of the project uncovered that the community is in the best position to allocate resources (Adato and Haddad. 2002. 33). Participation was a benefit to the community because it empowered them through the faith that they could manage their own affairs.

Examples such as the South African public works program show the important role of women in the community and the ability of the poor to undertake meaningful participation in the management of development.
The case studies have shown that empowerment and participation can have meaningful benefits for the community. They can have the propensity to involve weak forms of participation, but even these forms are seen make the community a part of the development process.

The case studies show that participation in projects can increase ownership. They also provide impetus for them to manage their own affairs in an effective way through the concepts of collective action.

The case studies show that for development programs to succeed meaningful forms of empowerment and participation are needed. This is a bottom up approach that attempts to solve local problems in the hope that the concept can address the wider issue of poverty.
community development through **empowerment** of the rural poor

chapter six

research findings
6. Research Findings

The findings of this chapter entail results from the literature review, the case study analysis and in depth interview. It discusses the main lessons that can be learnt in the theory and practice of empowerment and participatory development.

6.1. Findings of the Literature Review

6.1.1. Lack of Accountability

Research found that organisations involved in development programs did not make themselves accountable for possible program failures. This is due to the often rigid management systems that these organisations have. Non government organisations and major international development bodies tend to act paternalistic and stifle meaningful participation.

Accountability is a major theme of empowerment and participatory development, this lack of accountability leads to the community involved in the development process losing their voice.

6.1.2. The International Aid Community

The international community has failed to systematically include the collective capabilities of the poor in poverty reduction strategies (Narayan. 2002. 16). Given that the inclusion of collective capabilities is a main objective of empowerment the international development community needs to address this issue.
Another finding was that in 2002 major donors of aid increased their aid and development budgets for the first time in 15 years (Folke and Nielsen. 2006. 5). With worsening poverty in areas such as western Africa, countries such as Australia could have increased their budgets over this time. The main finding here is that poverty reduction over this period of 15 years was not given the priority it deserved.

Even when development organisations introduce empowering and participatory programs, they can have double standards. Many development organisations advocate the equal partnership of their projects with the community. However “he who pays the piper calls the tune” (Folke and Nielsen. 2006. 9). Invariably many development organisations take control over major decisions such as infrastructure location, which lessens their participatory and empowering objectives.

6.1.3. Problems with the World Bank

The World Bank supports empowering and participatory projects in countries with good governance. Often however, the countries that need development programs the most do not fit into this mould. There is an ethical conflict in the World Bank with its current practice.

Publications by the World Bank acknowledge that some if its projects with which aim at putting the community at the centre of the development process, actually put development staff more in the centre (Godinot in Godinot and Wodon (ed). 2006. 33). This is a negative outcome of their professional and organisational structure.
6.1.4. Negative Impacts due to the Structure of Development Organisations

The professional cultures of organisations involved in development processes can negate meaningful participation by beneficiaries. The structure and culture of these organisations in the application of empowerment programs have significant effects on the achievement of empowerment objectives (Bebbington et al. 2007. 599).

Deeply rooted professional cultures within organisations reduce everyday commitment on the ground to implement empowerment objectives (Bebbington et al. 2007. 615). The organisations involved in these development programs need to change their mindsets if they are to achieve their participatory and empowering objectives.

6.1.5. Findings of the Empowering Approach

In a review of empowerment as a means to alleviate poverty several key issues were found. In order to empower communities, they need access to information. Informed citizens are better able to take advantage of opportunities (Narayan. 2002. 19).

Communities need to be seen as co-producers of the development with some degree of control over their resources (Narayan. 2002. 19).

When the poor can hold accountable those that provide for them, power shifts to them which, results in empowerment (Narayan. 2002. 19). Communities to achieve these empowering objectives need to work together to mobilise resources and tackle problems collectively.
6.1.6. Findings of the Participatory Approach

The participatory approach to development works well at the small scale. Community based organisations if trained correctly can manage and supervise locally based projects very effectively (Meshack. 2004. 61). The participatory approach, like empowerment is stifled by the paternalistic role of external agencies and government departments.

A major finding of the literature review was the specifics involved in participatory processes. In Outreach International's approach, the main finding was that best practice involved the establishment of projects as a means of self help. This develops the poor's capacity to lift themselves out of poverty (Outreach International Website).

When undertaking taking participatory projects, the beneficiaries must be at the centre, but equally important is establishing rapport with the community. This is especially the case if development workers are not native to the area.

The identification of the problem needs to be identified by the community itself and discussed collectively, with as little input from external forces as possible. In this way the community gains a sense of ownership from the projects conception.

Another major finding of Outreach International's approach was that the evaluation of a project by the community after completion helps improve future projects. This process leads to increased empowerment and a sense of achievement (Outreach International Website).

Another major finding was that the leader of the development process needs be a native of the country itself, with appropriate training. In this way communities gain trust and respect which leads to greater participation.

Community Development Through Empowerment of the Rural Poor

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6.1.7. Findings of the United Nations

A review of United Nations humanitarian operations in Africa found that there was a large area of concern in the provision of meaningful empowerment and participation in development programs. Sub-Saharan Africa is the poorest region in the world and United Nations studies have found that this is the region that needs most help if they are to achieve the millennium development goals. It is these areas that rigorous empowerment and participatory development projects need to be employed.

A United Nations evaluation of projects in Africa with empowerment and participatory objectives found weak and substandard implementation of these objectives. The research also found that development projects were being captured by rural and political elite which stifled meaningful participation and empowerment. This is an area that needs monitoring. Development programs need to focus on minimising this capture.

6.1.8. The Importance of Women

One of the main findings of this study was that women are a group that need to be better included in participatory development programs. Due to their social isolation in patriarchal societies and their role in the household of developing nations, empowering women is seen a pressing issue.
The glaring overview of many development projects to empower women denies the community the right to achieve equality in development programs and participation. It also curtails the economic contribution of half the population (Narayan. 2002. 6). The major finding in this regard, is that by empowering women the well-being of children increases as does economic growth. Most importantly poverty is reduced.

6.2. Findings of the Case Study Analysis

The major findings of the case studies highlight how the theories shown in the literature review are applied in practice. Each case study is represented in this section, along with its major findings.

6.2.1. Findings of the Integrated Rural Development Project in Bangladesh

The Bangladesh case study had benefits and weaknesses. One major finding was the success in the formation of cooperatives for the poor. This was especially the case with the formation of the women road maintenance groups. These women gained long term employment and gained vital education and training that otherwise they would not have partaken in. The cooperatives in the Bangladesh case study benefited over 45,000 people and paved the way for more cooperatives in the region (Folke and Nielsen. 2006. 162). The major finding here is that by establishing poor cooperatives, in the future, more will follow. These enable the poor to act collectively, which is a major goal of empowerment.
The most successful aspect of the case study was the mass education program, which ended up benefiting 250,000 people (Folke and Nielsen. 2006. 162). Its successful targeting of women and children reached the most marginalised groups in the society. The research reinforced the importance of education as a tool for the poor to gain a sense of empowerment.

The case study was not all positive. The project had a goal of empowering women but they are still at a disadvantage in a male dominated society.

Although the program empowered during implementation its effects were not seen to be long term or meaningful. The poor are better off than they were 20 years ago but the impact of the program has not been dramatic (Folke and Nielsen. 2006. 166). Reasons for this seem to be factors such as the domination of development by the rural elite and the discrimination of women.

6.2.2. Findings of the Bonadikombo, Limbe Water Supply Project in Cameroon

A critical aspect of this case study was that the community initiated the project. This increased ownership of the project from its conception. This was an important area as highlighted in the literature review.

The local residents financial contributions and employment constituted weaker forms of participation. Although the participation was weak it actually constituted an economically efficient use of otherwise underused, labour, resources and talent (Njoh. 2003. 95). The research found that even weak forms of participation can have significant benefits.
As was with the Bangladesh case study it was not a complete success. External forces stifled community participation. Agents of the state played critical roles in the decision making aspect of the projects which inhibited the meaningful participation of local residents (Njoh. 2006. 99).

Paternalistic authorities also led to the project focussing on hard issues such as technology and resources rather than softer issues such as empowerment and participation.

Gate keeping of the project by local leaders led to participation being limited to interaction between the leaders of the community and higher authorities. For projects to have successful outcomes, participation is needed by the residents not just their local leaders.

6.2.3. Findings of the Community Self Help Project in Kumbo, Cameroon

The Kumbo project was a revolutionary self help initiative in Cameroon. Self help initiatives contribute greatly to project success. The community came together in a way that meant that they took complete ownership of the water infrastructure. Through this they were able to manage their own affairs and had the skills to undertake similar endeavours in the future.

Their sense of ownership was imbedded due to the fact that they contributed a significant amount of labour. Their financial contribution was more than the provincial and national governments combined. The finding of this case study was that often governments in nations such as these are not able to provide the necessary infrastructure for its population, especially those in isolated and rural locations.
The government department in charge of the maintenance of the water system was not able to do its job to a satisfactory manner, which is why residents demanded control. The research found that often stretched governments would be better suited to give control of resources to local populations. This is due to the fact that they will look after it better because of the direct impact it has on their lives.

Another major finding of this project was that outside funding is needed if projects such as these are to become a reality. Without the Canadian government’s financial contribution, the project would not have eventuated. These projects although needing to be run by the local community need to be funded externally, more often than not from major development organisations or western governments.

6.2.4. The Findings of the Public Works Programme in South Africa

A major finding in this case study was that community based organisations were a pre-existing entity in black South African society. Empowering and participatory projects can use these community organisations for future projects. It makes the achievement of empowering and participatory objectives easier to achieve due to a pre-existing organisational community structure.

Another major finding came in how the project targeted the poor. It provided below market wages so that only the poor would apply. Although there were some problems in this process it shows that this is one method of targeting the poor. For government who also want to spend less on infrastructure it represents a way to reduce costs.
The largest finding of this case study was the dispelling of popular thought in the project that women could not contribute in a meaningful way. Women were left out of many processes and given insufficient priority in terms of jobs and tasks (Adato and Haddad. 2002. 29). This insufficient priority proved to be unfounded due to the fact that in five of the projects women were said to work better then men. As well as this some employers noted women given the right training could do a job just as well as the men could (Adato and Haddad. 2002. 30).

The findings of the case studies shows how issues flagged in the literature such as project ownership and control over local resources by the community can contribute to project success. It also shows the major areas that projects can be impeded. In this way we can see the major ways to conduct successful projects. The following section shows the reader some of the insightful results of the in depth interview.

6.3. Results of the In Depth Interview

The results of the in depth interview found out how participatory development was undertaken in developing nations. It also provided insights into the how women participated in development. As well as this there was some discussion as to how the organisational structure of non government organisations affected project outcomes. Local knowledge as a source of valuable input was discussed as was the general nature of what empowerment and participation entailed. The major findings are discussed below.
6.3.1. **The Importance of Women in the Process**

The interview subject was asked the following question:

*It seems apparent that empowerment of women in less developed countries is perhaps the most pressing issue in community empowerment. Do you agree with this and in what way can women be effectively empowered and become involved in participation?*

The first subject that was talked about in this topic was the capacity of women. Eileen made the following comments.

*Women have a lot of capacity there's quite a large misconception (EP. 2007).*

The concept that women have a lot of capacity is a major finding in the research process. It is also supported by the positive comments made in the South African case study by employers. Eileen then goes on to talk about the ways in which women actually participate and some of their limitations.

*... they work differently... what they don't often have is the skills to work within a western system or to take leadership roles, their capacities tend to be informal...women find it daunting to be on all male committees.. (EP. 2007).*

Eileen highlights another major finding of this thesis. Often participation is limited due to rigid structures, whether this is of organisations involved in development or the social structures of the society itself. Eileen then goes on to describe the ways in which she trains women to undertake meaningful participation in patriarchal decision making circles. This is done so that;

*... by the time that the woman goes to take her place at the meeting she's feeling a lot more confident (EP. 2007).*
Findings of the research process highlighted the importance of effectively training people to take part in decision making, to have meaningful input. This concept applies to both men and women.

6.3.2. The Cultures of Development Organisations and their Impact on the Development Processes

The interview subject was asked the following question.

*How do the academic and professional cultures of organisations involved in empowerment, hinder or help implementation on the ground?*

The interview subject had the following response to this question.

*...often NGOs and academics are part of the problem not part of the solution. Because of their power, and they don't like to give it up, and they're paternalistic in terms of their approach, and there's also a class issue, where highly educated people from their countries bring a class issue into work as well. So its not just races it's across race and class and it can really impede this process. (EP. 2007)*

This answer supports both the literature and examples from the case studies. It also supports a major finding in that organisations although having empowering and participatory objectives do not translate this well into practice because of their professional cultures.
6.3.3. Local Knowledge and Its Importance

The following question was asked to gauge the importance of local knowledge in the development process, and whether local knowledge was an important step in developing services and infrastructure. The following question was asked.

*How important is local knowledge in development projects?*

The interview subject responded with the following answer.

*Essential absolutely essential... it’s about working with the people to see what happens, I mean if you completely ignore the fact of the local knowledge, if you completely ignore what people have been doing, programs will just fail, and they do.* (EP. 2007)

A major finding of the in depth interview was the importance of local knowledge. Local knowledge is seen to be very important by the interview subject. The importance of local knowledge is highlighted in the Kumbo water supply project. Due to local knowledge the water source was found. Local knowledge is especially important in rural areas as often farmers know the way of the land better than anyone.

6.3.4. Shifts in Power

The following question was asked in regards to achieving empowering objectives.

*Do you think that the solution to empowerment and its implementation require fundamental shifts in power?*

The interviewee responded with the following.
It does and it requires right from the bottom up it requires NGOs prepared to give power to partner agencies, and that seldom happens. (EP. 2007)

For these types of projects to be successful there needs to be a transfer of power to communities. People need to be charge of their own resources. A major finding in this regard is that the power that these communities do get seems to be limited by organisations involved.

6.3.5. What is Empowerment?

The interviewee was asked whether the major areas that deal with empowering the poor were covered. The interviewee responded with the following answer.

...empowerment is about both political rights as well as the provision of direct services, and until we look at both sides of the equation, people will say poor, and people need education, broad education and they need access to political systems not just to know about them, they need to have their voice and not just in the village life, and if you do it there’s a way forward and we’ve made it a bit more comfortable for them. (EP. 2007)

The results of this question are therefore a general summing up of what empowerment entails. Empowerment is about access to infrastructure and services. It is also about equality in political processes.

These findings of the research have led to the following chapter, which recommends ways in which empowering and participatory programs can be improved.
community development through empowerment of the rural poor

chapter seven
recommendations and conclusions
7 Recommendations and Conclusions

The following chapter details some of the general recommendations to help the poor improve their standard of living. There is a difference between the ideal of empowerment and participatory theory and its application. The following chapter aims to bridge this gap by recommending practices to ameliorate the difference between application and theory. The chapter will give meaningful areas of action for organisations undertaking projects with empowering and participatory approaches.

7.1. Recommendations for Land Reform in Rural Areas of Developing Nations

The majority of the rural poor do not own land. Governments in developing nations need to look at transferring tenancy ownership rights to give farmers the right of permanent residency (Sobhan in Folke and Nielsen. 2006. 43).

Other land reforms include giving the poor titles to land and water courses that are owned by the state (Sobhan in Folke and Nielsen. 2006. 43). There is scope to transfer ownership of uncultivated and unused land to the rural poor (Sobhan in Folke and Nielsen. 2006. 43). This type of land reform needs to be conducted in a sustainable way to ensure there is a minimum of environmental degradation.

A lot of problems in the rural areas of developing nations come from a corrupt and unjust land administration system. These need to be monitored and corrected (Sobhan in Folke and Nielsen. 2006. 43).

7.2. General Recommendations for the Poor

The following section will detail some general recommendations to help the poor improve their standard of living.
7.2.1. Economic and Monetary Recommendations

The rural poor suffer from a lack of equality in the market place and fiscal budgeting. Inequality exists in the market place in regards to the selling of rural produce. The capacity of the poor to compete in the marketplace needs strengthening (Sobhan in Folke and Nielsen. 2006. 45). This entails standardising prices for agricultural produce so that there is less risk of buyer exploitation.

Fiscal policy and budgetary allocations need to be made in consultation with the poor (Sobhan in Folke and Nielsen. 2006. 45). Governments are all too quick to listen to their middle and upper classes but often the poor are left out of the process. Public expenditure budgets directed at the poor need to be transparent and have a focus on both projects for the poor as well as the resources that impact their lives (Sobhan in Folke and Nielsen. 2006. 45).

Consultation with the poor over budgets needs to be institutionalised in order to influence policy makers (Sobhan in Folke and Nielsen. 2006. 45). National, state and local governments need to have more macro approaches in institutionalising empowerment and participatory approaches.

The rural poor are worthy of using established banks and are credit worthy (Sobhan in Folke and Nielsen. 2006. 47). If the poor can obtain established micro financing they can often find ways for an alternative source of income. Special financial instruments need to be set to attract the savings of the poor into the corporate sector (Sobhan in Folke and Nielsen. 2006. 47). Corporations can then be structured to serve the poor as equity owners (Sobhan in Folke and Nielsen. 2006. 47). If the poor can harness and collectively pool funds together, they will find it easier to lift themselves out of poverty.
The biggest challenge in terms of monetary reforms for the poor is to increase their purchasing power. For the rural poor this means increasing their productivity to claim a decent income (Smith. 2005. 33).

7.2.2. Institutions for the Poor

The poor need to act collectively. One of the best way to do this is participation in intuitions, so that they can exert pressure on governments and other organisations to change their way of life.

An NGO owned by and accountable to two million members or even 2000 members could emerge as a socially powerful organization at the national or local level with no less social legitimacy that a representative institution (Sobhan in Folke and Nielsen. 2006. 48).

7.2.3. The Recognition of Local Knowledge

Academic knowledge is sometimes seen to surpass local knowledge of development problems and issues. There needs to be greater recognition that the poor have extensive and untapped knowledge about the way of the land, and where best to situate infrastructure (Courtney et all in Xavier and Quentin (ed). 2006. 2). Using local knowledge involves greater levels of consultation with communities. The mindsets of organisations and individuals involved in international development need to acknowledge that the communities have greater knowledge about their local area.
7.2.4. The Importance of Women and Children

One of the biggest recommendations of this thesis is to increase the role of women and youth in the development process. Women and children need to be included in projects that affect lives because they are mainly responsible for the health of the household. They need to be acknowledged as the poorest of the poor and all development programs need to have objectives of empowering and creating greater participation for these groups.

7.3. Recommendations for Empowerment

The empowering process needs to give a voice to those in rural areas of developing nations. They need to be taken seriously by governments and organisations. The best way to empower people is to involve them in the development process and give them control of resources. Groups in the community need to be identified to find potential leaders. This can come from areas such as schools and churches (Courtney et al. Godinot and Wodon (ed.) 2006. 9).

Empowering projects must be long term. In the preliminary phases potential participants need to be made aware that their involvement will need to be ongoing and lengthy (Courtney et al. Godinot and Wodon (ed.) 2006. 9). In this way the waning of enthusiasm that was apparent in some of the case studies can be negated.

It is hard for empowering approaches to be undertaken by the community if it is controlled by an external entity. The project has to be initiated by the community. It has to identify the problem before an outside organisation does. Often language barriers between external foreigners and the beneficiaries stifle meaningful projects and empowerment, so a native speaker driving the development is essential.
7.4. Recommendations for Participation

For projects to have a better outcomes and a better chance of success, they need to be initiated by the community. In this way the community gains a sense of ownership from project conception; this in turn creates more participation.

If the community induces a project they need to be well informed of the process to maintain interest. They will then be better able to analyse community issues and problems, manage their resources better, and maintain project goals (Meshack. 2004. 63-64).

The community also needs to be trained sufficiently prior to project initiation. They must have the skills to do further projects in the future without the large involvement of external agencies. Community members are the primary stakeholders in community based projects. They need to be given the priority in decision making processes (Meshack. 2004. 81).

Participation is more likely to be greatest when development projects provide income and job opportunities (Meshack. 2004. 64). It is recommended that any works for infrastructure be undertaken by the community itself. The community should also attempt to put some money towards the project. This way they will be more willing to help in implementing the project.

Participatory projects also have to have political backing; this is because the people can not exclusively fund the projects. The state, local or national government need to invest in the development. After all it is their job to provide for their people. The government needs to be careful of not taking over control of the projects, as external control of community based projects can often lead to negative outcomes.
The researcher recognises that although the community needs to be given a large amount of control over resources, technical decisions are bound to be made by experts. External agencies by no means have to put the local people in charge but they do need to develop active partnerships with the local people especially with the most marginalised groups, so that they can demand better performance from external agencies (Brett. 2003. 23).

7.5. Recommendations from The World Bank

The World Bank has come up with three recommendations in regards to projects that are classified as community based development (CBD) and community driven development (CDD).

They recommend analysing whether the project is building on local initiatives or starting a whole new incentive. The World Bank recommends that a project should build on local initiatives and to tailor the project to the country and community context (World Bank OED. 2005. x). This needs to be combined with a selective and rigorous impact assessment before the project is scaled up (World Bank OED. 2005. x).

The second recommendation refers to project finance. There needs to be a strengthening of the ...operational guidance for the application of safeguard policies and fiduciary oversight of CBD/CDD projects and for cost-benefit analysis and monitoring and evaluation (M&E) systems, and it should commission an audit of the fiduciary aspects of a representative sample of CDD projects to be submitted to the Board within a year  (World Bank OED. 2005. x). This recommendation is made so that the finance of the project can be strictly controlled and so that funds do not become embezzled.
The third recommendation refers to how The World Bank assists countries in terms of development. The World Bank contributes to national development through ‘Country Assistance Strategies’. The World Bank states that community based development and community driven development should be included in all future ‘Country Assistance Strategies’. These projects should not be made at the expense of local government capacity (World Bank OED. 2005. x).

Community driven development and participatory development needs to be included in most development projects and needs to be included in national policy.

7.6. Successful Development Projects

The following is a brief list of recommendation on how to conduct successful development projects

**Target Group Orientation**- There must be clearly defined target groups with sufficient attention paid to achieving empowerment as an objective (Zoomers. 2005. 290). Groups need to be identified so that they can be targeted efficiently. An example of this could be the targeting of women.

**Institutional Characteristics and Organisational Setup**- Projects need to imbedded in the community. Staff quality and their continual work on projects are essential to the smooth running of a project (Zoomers. 2005. 290).

**Policy Context**- There needs to be consistency between project goals and national policy, with a minimum of donor driven changes (Zoomers. 2005. 290). National policies of empowerment and participation would be of a great benefit to the projects implementation.
Project Design, Planning and Implementation- There needs to be a degree of flexibility in the process of design and implementation of these projects in order for unforseen circumstances to be responded to appropriately (Zoomers. 2005. 290). There also needs to be consistency between the goals and activities in the project (Zoomers. 2005. 290). In this way outcomes will be made stronger by adherence to the goals of the project.

Human Resources and Project Team Organisation- Projects that have a continuous professional staff tend to fare better (Zoomers. 2005. 290). Therefore it is important that staff remain high quality and turnover is kept to a minimum.

7.7. The Researcher’s Recommendations

Throughout the research process the researcher found some gaps in the literature and in some of the recommendations that the literature has flagged.

Because local organizations involved in the process of empowerment are often controlled and run by the local elites, it is better for empowerment projects to be run by federal or state governments. In this way it will stop the local elite capture of the project. The government can use the local population to help provide badly needed infrastructure. As some case studies have shown they can give the rural poor employment. In some cases they can provide below market rate wages which makes the development cheaper in the end for the government.

In Africa before colonial times the people had a strong sense of community i.e. pitching in to help each other. This needs to be tapped into and no where in the world is there more potential to use the cultural history of a region to employ empowerment objectives.
The increasing IT and telecommunications industry is changing the way the world conducts business, communicates and educates. The revolution is yet to be felt in rural areas of developing nations. These areas can greatly benefit from greater access to the internet and telecommunications. In this way they gain knowledge through concepts of self education. They can also press for action to be taken to improve their way of life through having their voices heard and decreasing their social exclusion from the rest of the world. This is vital for the sharing of knowledge, and, knowledge is power.

The process of empowerment and participation involves fundamental shifts in power. This is one of the major barriers when undertaking empowerment projects. Governments sometimes are very reluctant to shift their power bases. The mindset of people throughout the international development industry needs to change if there is to be any real changes and reduction of poverty in developing nations.

7.8. Conclusions

This thesis has critically discussed the concepts involved in community empowerment and participation in the development process. It is through these processes that the goal of poverty alleviation is strived for in rural areas of developing nations. Through the research process which involved a case study analysis, a literature review and a qualitative in depth interview the major issues involved in the topic areas have canvassed.

The current issues involved in these processes have been discussed as has the stance of major development bodies such as The World Bank, the United Nations and some non government organisations. This research process has allowed for the research questions upon which the thesis is based to be answered. The answers to these important questions are provided in the following section.
The following question was posed in the introductory section of this thesis.

1. What are the main concepts involved in community empowerment?

Empowerment involves expanding the capabilities of the poor. Its main process involves putting the community at the centre of the development process. To this end the community becomes empowered due to the fact that they have a certain degree of control over their own resources. The community become empowered because they gain a sense of ownership over the service or infrastructure being provided.

One of the main concepts involved in creating efficient empowering projects include the access of the community to information, as informed citizens make better development decisions.

Accountability in the development process is another crucial aspect of an empowering approach. Power shifts to communities when they can hold accountable the institutions which provide for them.

Increasing the capabilities of the poor specifically refers to local organisational capacity. This is when a community works together to mobilise resources and tackle problems as a group. This is another major process involved in community empowerment.

The above processes show the main ways in which empowerment is undertaken.

The second research question that was posed is provided below.
2. What are the main impediments to community empowerment and participatory development?

One of the main impediments was the paternalistic role of authorities. Authorities that take over decision making reduce community control over resources, which is a major element of the empowering approach.

Often participation is limited to interaction between local leaders and higher authorities. This is not the objective of the empowering approach. The rural elite can also take over projects which impedes empowering and participatory approaches.

The professional and organisational structures of development bodies are often more at the centre of the development process than the community. Empowerment as a concept goes against entrenched power structures that these organisations have, and their tendency to practice weaker forms of empowerment and participation is a large problem.

One of the largest impediments to achieving empowering and participatory objectives is the social make up of the community itself. Often women and children are left out of the development process, due their roles in the society and the household. This impedes a significant proportion of the population from contributing in the development process.

The above impediments are the main issues in these processes.

3. What groups need empowerment the most?

The research process came up with clear answers to this question. The poor are the group that need empowerment the most due to their social isolation from the rest of their countries citizens. Through empowering projects they gain control over resources, this gives the poor the capacity to lift themselves out of the poverty trap.
Out of the poor, the rural poor are one of the neediest groups of empowering projects. Many suffer greatly from a lack of services and infrastructure due to their stretched governments and their inability to provide for their isolated rural citizens.

To be more specific, women need to be included more in development projects, more than any other group. Empowering women increases the health of the household and decreases poverty. This is as a very important reason to increase women’s role in the development process.

It is through the research process that these groups have been identified. This has also led to the effective answering of the following question.

4. Are bottom-up projects a better alternative than a top-down approach to ameliorate poverty?

The participatory approach was employed due to the failure of top-down methods (Brett. 2003. 1). Due to this fact, bottom-up participatory projects can be said to be a better alternative than a top-down method.

Top-down approaches are seen to have negative outcomes in participation. They reinforce the autocratic role of the development organisations involved, rather than empowering those who need it.

In some of the case studies, the paternal nature of authorities stifled meaningful participation, this is another major reason why a bottom-up method, with the community being in charge of decisions is a more appropriate method.

The last question posed is also shown below.

5. Does involvement by the community in the development process increase the rural poor’s skills to undertake similar projects in the future?
By increasing the poor’s participation in development processes, sometimes they can use the skills learnt in later endeavours.

This occurred in the Kumbo water scheme where the community took over control of their water source. Because of their sense of ownership through participation, the community mobilised and took control of a vital source of infrastructure, and was able to effectively maintain it.

Similarly, in the Bangladesh case study the setting up of poor cooperatives paved the way for more in the future. Self help projects happen in the future when the poor are trained effectively. It is through the decreased reliance on external forces that these people can escape poverty traps.

7.8.2. Concluding Remarks

The importance of this type of study is more than relevant when the current situation of many people in the rural areas of developing nations is highlighted. Many people in the rural areas of developing nations live in conditions which are unimaginable for western citizens. It is this reason why empowering the rural poor is such an important issue for the international community.

Empowerment in the form of participation in development processes has been proven as way for the rural poor to gain control over the resources that directly affect their lives. Through controlling their resources and having a voice in the development process, the poor increase their capacity to lift themselves out of poverty.

As the research process has found there can be many impediments to empowerment and participation. The recommendations of this thesis show ways in which these practices can be improved. It is hoped that these recommendations can be used in development practice to help in the alleviation of poverty.
In this way the conditions in which these people live can be improved and the world become a more equal place. Meaningful improvements can occur and it is only through the combined efforts of all that important issue of community development through empowerment of the rural poor be sufficiently addressed.

Wherever men and women are condemned to live in extreme poverty, human rights are violated. To come together to ensure that these rights be respected is our solemn duty. (Godinot in Godinot and Wodon (ed). 2006. 28)


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