

**Assessing Community Participation in Rural Development Projects. A Case Study of CARE Zimbabwe's Small Dams Rehabilitation Project (SDRP) in Mushagashe.**

By

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**A mini-thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts Development Studies at the Institute of Social Development, University of the Western Cape, Bellville – Cape Town, South Africa**

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## **Declaration**

I hereby declare that the mini-thesis on the topic '*Assessing Community Participation in Rural Development Projects. A Case Study of CARE Zimbabwe's Small Dams and Community Resources Management Programme (SDCRMP) in Mushagashe*' is my own work, that it has not been submitted for any Degree or Examination in any other University, and that all the sources I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by complete references.

**Jacob Tagarirofa**

**Date.....**

**Signature.....**

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## **Dedication**

I dedicate this mini thesis to my wife, Beatrice and my beloved son Junior 'King' Shadreck!

## **Abstract**

*The study sought to evaluate the challenges and opportunities for effective community participation in rural development projects in Zimbabwe through one case-study, and in turn to test the credibility of the popularized supposition that almost all contemporary development efforts characteristically embrace local participation. This matters as public participation is widely assumed to be an essential ingredient for the fruition of rural development efforts. The case examined was to achieve this aim. The research made use of quantitative and qualitative research methodologies in which various data gathering instruments were used. Among them were unstructured interviews, focus group discussions and questionnaires. The discussion and analysis of data was enabled by the use of People-Centered Development (PCD) as a conceptual framework. Among other findings, a key insight of the research was that the level of community participation in this case is not only minimal, but it is also top down. This has much to do with the negative perceptions by facilitating agents of local people as passive recipients of externally crafted models of development and other factors such as the power dynamics within and between the community and other stakeholders. The research also found out other obstacles that militate against effective participation such as preferential treatment of other tribal groups by the facilitating agent, intra group conflicts and bureaucratic and political influence. Based on these findings, and consistent with the wider literature, a key recommendation of the research is that the nature of community engagement should be based on the principle of equal partnership among all stakeholders as this would encourage full cooperation and thus effective participation.*

*November 2011*

**Key Words:** *Community; Participation; Empowerment; Rural development; Mobilization; Cooperation; Mushagashe; Non-Governmental Organization; Monitoring; Evaluation*

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## **Acronyms**

UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
PCD	People Centered Development
CBD	Convention on Biodiversity
CCD	Convention to Combat Desertification
WSSD	World Summit on Sustainable Development
RDC	Rural District Council
RDCA	Rural District Council Act
WARDCO	Ward Committee
VIDCO	Village Committee
MDC	Movement for Democratic Change
ZANU PF	Zimbabwe African National Union Patriotic Front
CAMPFIRE	Communal Areas Management Programme for Indigenous Resources
NGO	Non Governmental Organization
IFAD	International Fund for Agricultural Development
WHO	World Health Organization
ILO	International Labor Organization
FAO	Food and Agricultural Organization
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
SFDP	Small Farmer Development Programme
PPP	People's Participation Programme

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## **Chapter One**

### **1.1.0 Background and Contextualization**

The concept of local or community participation in development gained prominence in development discourse in the 1970s and since then literature on the subject has grown significantly (Chambers, 1992; Brohman, 1996; Oakley, 1992). According to Winder (1981:13), it was through the influence of Paolo Freire's work on the concept of conscientization and analysis of the structural obstacles to the development of Latin American peasantry which stressed the dialogical approach to project work. His argument was that the peasant should be the subject and not the object of development, and this orientation helped affirm the importance of participation. Notably, according to Catanese (1984:124), the idea of community participation in planning had been a long standing and intrinsic part of the history of planning. Thus this words 'participation' and 'participatory' development (Rahnema, 1997:117) appeared for the first time in the development jargon during the late 1950s, Stiefel and Wolfe (1994:21) hold that the term popular participation entered into the international discourse on development during the 1960s and became most prevalent in the 1970s, especially in respect of the field of rural development.

Thus at this time local participation became a major concern for United Nations agencies such as International Labor Organization (ILO); the World Health Organization (WHO); the Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO); the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD); and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) (Oakley and Marsden, 1994:14). For example, the FAO identified participation as central to future strategies to tackle rural underdevelopment and more specifically, to realize the success of the Small Farmer Development Programme (SFDP) in Nepal launched in 1980, which included the People's Participation Programme (PPP) (Bortei-Doku, 1991:61). Since then, many resources have gone into the promotion of participation in rural development. Participation seemed to gain ground again in the 1990s with the hopes that it would emancipate people from the bedeviling crises of their collapsing livelihoods (Maser,

1997:12). This revival was marked by the International Conference on Popular Participation in the Recovery and Development Process in Africa which was held in Arusha, Tanzania in 1990. In the opening statement, of this conference, Adedeji was quoted as saying:

*“The democratization of the development process, by which we mean the empowerment of the people, their involvement in decision making, in implementation and monitoring process is a condition sine qua non for socio-economic recovery and transformation. African leadership and African people must not desire self reliance but must will it”* (Shaw, 1990:20)

The incorporation of the local people in development projects has become a common phenomenon which almost every organization claims to embrace. . However, this acknowledgement seems biased since it has not been the case with ‘every’ organization. For instance, at a macro level, the Economic Structural Adjustment Program (ESAP) for most developing countries was alleged by Kanyenze (2004:106) to be a mere imposition by the World Bank and International Monetary Fund which was deficient of local input hence their failure. The concept originated after it was realized that the top-down approach to development did not achieve its developmental goals, which were often very specific material outcomes, and this in turn may have been linked to the lack of inclusion of those people for whom these outcomes were designed (Brohman, 1996). This can be exemplified by the case of USAID which Chiome and Gambahaya (2000) showed as a clear illustration of the negative effects of the domineering role of development agents. In this context it constructed pit latrine toilets in a Bangladesh community without consultations and consent from the local community with the intention of preventing what the implementing agent foresaw as a potential hub for diseases outbreak since the community used to defecate in their rice fields. These efforts by the agent were futile since they were met with violent resistance from the community, which responded by destroying the toilets arguing that it was their cultural practice to use their rice fields as toilets for the sake of increasing productivity. In this context the agent did not consult the community in the first place and this is why the community did not take part and instead destroyed the constructed structures in protestation.

Therefore, the current development efforts have been recommended to embrace local or community participation if they are to depart from repetition of the domineering and exclusivist orientation that characterized past development approaches and their negative effects. However, even though the discourse on participation has been widely accepted and emphasized as a feasible substitute for the unwarranted relegation of the local people in implementation of development initiatives, the rapid proliferation of the term and its myriad applications have sparked a great deal of debate and controversy (Chambers, 1992; Brohman; 1996). Consequently this served as a stimulus for more critical enquiry of the concept in the contemporary epoch as is the preoccupation of this particular research.

Furthermore, despite its wide acceptance as a useful approach to rural development, Makumbe (1998) submits that its proclamation has been more rhetorical than it has been practical inasmuch as there have been overwhelming evidence of limited cooperation from local people due to their marginalization from participation in its proper sense, a case in point is the Bangladesh case alluded to by Chiome and Gambahaya (2000) above. As such, the concept of community participation has remained a key theme in development discourse for the past few decades, yet a variety of literature alleges that there is no significant transformation from development agents' notions of the local people as passive recipients of predesigned development projects (Makumbe, 1998; Kanyenze, 2004).

During the preceding decades, African countries and many others in the developing world have witnessed an unparalleled surge in programs and projects aimed at providing solutions to development woes that have been troubling them (Howard, 1998). Conversely, these efforts have remained in vain since they have left out the 'victims' in the identification, planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of projects aimed at averting their fate (Kottack, 2001). Coetzee, 2001 further notes that this logjam has precipitated from the failure of these programs to include analyses of social and cultural phenomena, which influence the relationship between people and development. Awori (1996:1) have noted that, fundamentally lacking in these approaches has been the peoples' dimension which incorporates their indigenous knowledge, experiences,

technologies, aspirations, skills, wisdom, culture and local governance systems. This is best explained by the reasons why USAID failed in Bangladesh and ESAP failed in most developing countries as alluded to above by Chiome and Gambahaya (2000) and Kanyenze (2004). A classical example is the recent findings by Gukurume et.al (2010) on the participation of the local people in CARE's Conservation Farming Project in Chivi district of Masvingo in Zimbabwe. They established that the failure of the project in some areas such as Maringire and Mhandamabwe was highly due to the imposition of the project without grassroots consultation from the onset which later thwarted efforts to mobilize the communities for participation

Coetzee (2001: 87) confirms that these bygone approaches to development were heavily influenced by the models of 'dependency' and 'intervention' based on rescue solutions in times of crises and emergencies. This was the preoccupation of the modernization paradigm which emerged as a consequent of the Marshal Plan which was aimed at resuscitating war ravaged Europe after the World War II (Brohman 1996). Development efforts were often prescriptive and dictated to the people what organizations thought the people's problem was, and how to solve it. Put differently, the United Nations development Program (UNDP) (1998:7) has written that, organizations prescribed to the people the 'song' that they wanted them to 'dance' to, rather than 'dancing' with the people to the 'song' that the people had chosen. In this scenario, the people were viewed as passive recipients of development policies and programs rather than active participants in the process. The people were dependent on the government and development agencies for solutions to their problems. The general belief was that the people did not have the knowledge to change their own lives, leaving governments, policy planners and experts in development issues to decide for them (Kottack, 1996:12). Governments and development agencies had for decades, adopted this approach, and solved crises as they arose rather than developing long-term programs involving the people.

The people for whom these policies were designed were generally marginalized and ignored since they were not given the opportunity to initiate, design and plan development projects that were ultimately expected to help them (Kottack, 1996;

Makumbe, 1998; Brohman, 1996). In most cases, the people were expected to take over the project in the implementation phase (Gukurume et.al, 2010). The researcher opines that, this approach gave the impression that people, especially rural communities, were not qualified to initiate, design or plan projects or programs. Furthermore, Makumbe (1998) and Gukurume et.al (2010) concur that the development arena was dominated by governments and foreign experts, mostly male. Groups such as women, local based organizations, local people, especially rural communities, were marginalized in the development process. The gender dimension of poverty was overlooked although, according to the UNDP, women represented and still represent the majority of people living in poverty all over the world. Similarly, local skills, talents and experience were underestimated. As such, the government and foreign experts did not understand the real needs of the communities since they did not stay among the people or make an effort to involve them in the choice of development programs.

As a result, most of the efforts by both governments and development agencies failed to have any lasting impact on the real life situation of the people. In most cases, the development programs that the people were expected to take over in the implementation phase collapsed; communities did own programs and projects that were imposed on them and did not feel responsibility for their failure or success. However, in since 1990s there has been a shift by governments and development agencies in policy and focus in the attainment of sustainable rural development programs. These have claimed to be using a participatory approach to development in project implementation where the community is allowed free play in the development process, that is, from the design, implementation and the monitoring and evaluation stages as Makumbe (1998) confirms. Nonetheless, in as much as the above is true in the view of governments and development agencies, the facts on the ground suggest that the participation has not been that meaningful. As such, questions have been posed as to whether current government and donor driven development efforts are indeed informed by community participation or rather the concept is a mere formality which has corrupted its prominence in the broader development horizon.

Thus Matowanyika (1998:11) attests that "... in the history of failed development efforts in Lesotho and the region, a major fault is that development programs were not rooted in local values, institutions and local people's committed responses". Therefore, it is precisely due to this background of failed development that this applied research seeks to unearth the weaknesses of past and current development efforts in their unwarranted disregard of the much needed involvement of the local people in all the phases of development projects.

## **1.2.0 The Research Problem**

### **1.2.1 Statement of the Problem**

The research is premised on the understanding that the concept of community participation as widely advocated for by the participatory development paradigm has not lived up to its billing of ensuring the practical and meaningful involvement of the local people in development projects in rural communities. It is clear from evidence in the literature that the concept has not brought the results expected of it due to marginalization of intended beneficiaries from partaking. In fact, community participation has been largely rhetorical and has remained elusive in the realm of practice in rural development projects. Notwithstanding its theoretical popularity in the discourse of participatory development, the concept has been over-rated and oversold by development agents and governments in developing countries. These have fallen into the trap of taking the phrase participatory development at face value yet in pragmatic terms it has grossly been deficient in project implementation. What is even more salient is the realization that, community participation exercises are gradually and explicitly degenerating into distanced undertakings where ordinary people have mostly become recipients of pre-designed programmes, often a product of administrative manipulation. It would seem to mean that development agents are determined to impose their own version and understanding of community participation on particular communities (Brohman, 1996: 34). Therefore, it is against such a setup that the research aims to untie and redefine the concept of community participation as it relates to decision making in selection, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of development projects by the

targeted beneficiaries, through exploring the challenges that could be militating against these realms of participation. The study sought to review community participation with the view to suggest specific remedies to inform more meaningful forms of engagement, dialogue and empowerment at local level. The research, therefore, shall evaluate whether the nature of community engagement in Mushagashe community is promotive of local participation and suggest numerous conceptual and practical steps that development agents and the local people should adhere to if otherwise, for the institutionalization of effective involvement of local people in development initiative.

### **1.2.2 Aim of the study**

The research's primary aim is to ascertain the meaning and practice of community participation in current rural development efforts; and to assess the extent to which it is possible to institutionalize effectively community participation and consequently account for the challenges and prospects of such efforts to directly involve the local people in development endeavors.

### **1.2.3 Objectives of the Study**

The study will be guided by the following objectives:

1. To find out the perceptions of implementing agents and local people towards local participation;
2. To identify the mechanisms for community participation in the rehabilitation project;
3. Assess the extent and nature of participation in each mechanism.
4. To elicit the challenges faced by development organizations and local residents in effective participation in development projects;
5. To suggest recommendations based on research findings.

### **1.2.4 Significance of the Study**

Wilcox (1996) had noted that although the concept of community participation has virtually moved to mainstream development since the mid-1980s, many attempts at institutionalizing community participation have been characterized by partial success,

because development practitioners are often unclear about where and which level of participation is feasible. However, suffice it to say that bringing communities to ‘talk about a community project is necessary, but not sufficient for communities to realize project gains (Kottack, 1998: 67). Therefore, participation is most likely to be effective when the different interests groups in a project are satisfied with the level at which they are involved. This research is aimed at exploring this gap to obtain the opinions of communities about what participation means to them – where and at what level participation should occur? This will then be useful to ascertain conditions that might promote or inhibit communities from attaining the full benefits of participation. The findings and recommendations could be used in rural development planning and implementation of rural development strategies. This particular research would be helpful in casting light on the nature of participation in this particularly community. This would ascertain whether the participation is active or passive, direct or indirect and voluntary or coerced. Besides, the research would also bear a positive effect in enlightening the community of its need to be directly part of activities that affect its wellbeing in the long run. It would also appraise the scant studies of community participation which have previously focused on the impact of participation on the overall project outcome and overlooking the need to ascertain whether there is that participation in the first place. As a consequence, this could be a positive point of departure for any endeavors to influence the nature of community engagement towards a more participatory orientation.

### **1.2.5 Organization of the thesis**

#### **Chapter One: Introduction**

This chapter gives a background to the study. It highlights the problem statement and why the stated problem is worth investigating. It also highlights the significance of this particular study. The main assumptions of the research and the research purpose are also highlighted in this chapter.

## **Chapter Two: Research Methodology.**

This chapter discusses the main research instruments used to collect and analyze data. It explains the sample design, sampling techniques and the criteria for the choice of sample size. Lastly, this chapter shows some ethical considerations of the research and limitations.

## **Chapter Three: Theoretical Framework and Literature Review**

In this chapter theoretical approaches to participatory community development are discussed. I start by tracing the historical development of participatory development. The chapter also introduces conceptual definitions of key concepts and variables in the study. These are mainly participation and social capital. Lastly, it ends by analyzing literature on participation and various debates about the concept and how it relates to development.

## **Chapter Four: Research descriptive background and context**

Chapter Four is organized into two parts. The first part describes in detail the socio demographic and economic characteristics of the research setting. The second part presents data from the field survey both quantitative and qualitative.

## **Chapter Five: Discussion and Analysis of findings**

This chapter is descriptive in nature and presents an analysis of the research findings. It discusses and cross-examines the validity of the literature on community participation against the findings in detail but within the framework of the theoretical approach used which is the People Centered Approach.

## **Chapter Six: Insights, Conclusions and recommendation**

Chapter Seven firstly gives general insight about the concept of community participation as discussed and from the findings. This is followed by conclusion of the major findings and discussions and then the recommendations are given for improving community participation given the challenges that render it an elusive concept.

## **Chapter Two**

### **2.1.0 Research Design**

This chapter is a presentation of the research design and methodology used to gather relevant data for the purpose of this research. This includes the research design used and the corresponding data collection tools used. It should be noted that the tools selected were appropriate for the research aims and objectives since they were meant to provide answers to the research questions below.

A research design provides the framework for the collection and analysis of data. The choice of a research design reflects decisions about priorities relating to a range of dimensions of the research process (Bryman, 2001). In a similar vein, Mouton (1996) states that research design is a set of guidelines to be followed in addressing a research problem. Thus, it helps to make appropriate decisions in the research process.

This research focused on the selected case study area which is Mushagashe where necessary data from the respective implementing agent, the intended beneficiaries and the government offices under which the area's jurisdiction falls in, was collected. This has enabled the researcher to provide recommendations to the implementing organization and all stakeholders who are involved in rural development projects where community participation is expected to be the *modus operandi*.

The aim of the research was to assess community participation in rural development projects. The research used the following research questions as a research guide to achieve the aim.

1. What was the project about and what did it achieve?
2. Did the project have any mechanisms to promote community participation?
3. How have the community contributed at any stage of the project?
4. How has the local leadership influenced community's participation?
5. What was the role of government in promoting community participation?

6. What were the challenges encountered by stakeholders in promoting community participation?

As a result of the above acknowledgment, data gathering included literature review of secondary data; focus group discussions; informal and semi-structured interviews with key informants and questionnaires.

## **2.2.0 Data collection**

### **2.2.1 Case study**

Basically, a case study is an in-depth study of a particular situation rather than a sweeping statistical survey (Babbie and Mouton, 2001). It is a method used to narrow down a very broad field of research into one easily researchable topic. Whereas case study research design has been castigated on the grounds that it is such a narrow field and its results cannot be extrapolated to fit an entire question and that it only shows one narrow example. On the other hand it has hailed for providing more realistic responses than a purely statistical survey (Haralambos and Holborn, 1999: 567). The Mushagashe case for instance yielded realistic responses in that there was direct interaction with the beneficiaries and other stakeholders, who were instrumental in either participating or not in the small dams' rehabilitation project.

### **2.2.2 Geographical Background of the Case Study Area**

This section seeks firstly to provide some background information and a detailed description of the case study area which is Mushagashe. The physical and social characteristics as well as economic activities will be discussed.

### **2.2.3 Physical and Socio-economic Features**

The area of study is Mushagashe Community. Mushagashe is located 25 kilometers north of Masvingo City. It is about 1200 hectares in extend and resided by about 90 households with a population of about 800 (AREX, 1998). Mushagashe Community shares a boundary with the Mutirikwi Conservancy to the North.

The community falls entirely under the climatic region four (4) of Zimbabwe. The average rainfall per annum is 450mm and due to its unreliability suitable farming systems are those based on the utilization of the veld. Temperatures are high with maximum temperatures above 30 degrees. This is especially during the month of October to February. The annual mean temperature has been 22.1 degrees. Farming systems based on beef, goat and poultry are common. Most of the community's livelihood is sustained by livestock production whose resource base was destroyed by the 1991-92 devastating drought. Crop production is viable under irrigation hence the need for Care Zimbabwe's intervention through rehabilitation of small dams as water reservoirs.

Soils are dark reddish, brown and moderate deep to deep clay loams and alluvial along rivers and streams such as Shakashe and Pokoteke River among others. As a result of the high clay content of the soils they have good water holding capacity as well as good permeability. The topography comprises of gentle sloping wide crest separated by shallow drainage depressions. The altitude of the area is plus or minus 400m above sea level (Care, 2000).

Vegetation comprises of generally a drought tolerant shrub and bush savanna. Trees are durable hard woods suitable for firewood and roofing of houses, for example the *Mopani* and acacia tree species. The *Mopani* fruit, *acacia* and *kigelia Africana* pods and dry leaves of tree species in the area provide winter forage. Thus given such a geographical background one would assume that the area is a haven of developmental activities since the conditions are suitable for various development projects to sprout and as such the concept of community participation comes under spotlight.

Subsistence farming households in this community are not well equipped with information and resources to deal with these constraints, and are often totally dependent on scarce and degrading land and water resources for survival. Hence the prevalence of poor farming and grazing practices, mismanagement of meager water resources, and increased soil erosion, deforestation, and land degradation, which, in a vicious circle, exacerbate poverty in the community. As a consequent, this particular project by CARE Zimbabwe sought to provide remedies to this impasse through rehabilitation of small

water reservoirs, a deliberation which was anticipated to be fruitions through community mobilization and participation. Therefore the reason for evaluating this by exploring the nature and levels of participation by the local people in this particular development project in this rural community is tenable, if the existence of community participation in development projects is to be ascertained.

#### **2.2.4 Justification of the Case Study Area**

The above case study site has been selected because of the problems and challenges that are being faced in this area in terms of community participation in the development process. The main motivation of selecting this particular case study area is due to the fact that the researcher has a wide range of experience within the area because it is a next village to the researcher's home area. Since the area harbors a significant rural development project by as well a big organization in the province, it provides the best platform for understanding the mechanisms, levels, nature and setbacks of meaningful participation in these projects by local people.

Nonetheless, this does not mean there is nothing to write about these people's participation in development. What it means is that there is in Mushagashe an information gap that needs to be filled in through research. Opuku (1998) observed that "...if you get close enough to the river you can hear the crab coughing." This implies that if researchers get close to this community they get to hear things they did not know before. As such the researcher needs to find out the real issues pertaining to community participation in development projects in this particular community with the view to proffer recommendations based on these forthcoming findings.

The Mushagashe community boasts of a multiplicity of projects on biodiversity conservation and livelihoods improvement (AREX, 1998). The area is home to projects on sustainable agriculture spearheaded by 'Africa2000 Plus Network', a local NGO. It is the aim of this research to assess whether the local people are given their due opportunity to participate in all the phases of the community project, using CARE's Small Dams Rehabilitation Project (SDRP) as a case study.

### **2.3.0 Research methodology**

Overall this was a qualitative study of one case in that it sought to find in-depth information about one case rather than information about a range of cases. Furthermore the insights were not generalized to other cases. Within the one case, the researcher used both qualitative and quantitative research methodologies. A combination of these two methodologies was suitable for this research because they helped in soliciting full, in-depth accounts of the levels of participation of the local people as statistically reflected in the records and reports of this project and their perceptions. This complementary usage of research designs is supported by Waysman and Savaya (1995) who observe that combining the two research methodologies help in the acquisition of comprehensive data about the variables under investigation. This, they allege would be possible because combining merits of the designs implies that the demerits of each can be eliminated by the advantages of the other. This is again qualified by Cook and Reichardt (1979) who submit that, combining these two methodologies obviously yields added advantage to the reliability of the findings if proper data collection tools are employed, relative to using a single research design.

Bryman (2001) refers to a research method as technique for collecting data and Mouton (2001) highlights the importance of methodology as a procedure that a researcher uses to condense, organize and analyze data in the process of undertaking scientific research in social science. In this research, both quantitative and qualitative approaches were used. Quantitative methods were used to measure variables that were linked to the research problem in the case study area. The rationale behind using qualitative methodologies, in addition to quantitative data, was to increase understanding about dynamics, opinions and perceptions of people in the case study area about the efficacy of their participation in local project aimed to benefit them. A literature review; questionnaires, informal and semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions were used as methodological tools in the research process.

### **2.3.1 Quantitative data**

Care Zimbabwe has been implementing community development projects in different parts of the country. In many provinces project activities have been carried out for many years with only project evaluation in terms of sustainability being carried out without due regard to the assessment of local participation in these very projects. As such community participation has remained questionable. On the basis of this background, the researcher used structured semi structured questionnaires to assess the extent of community participation, mechanisms to promote community participation and other related issues. In order to collect such quantitative data, purposive and systematic sampling methods were used. Purposive sampling was used to gather data from the informants who had in-depth knowledge of the case study area and its development activities especially project coordinators from Care Zimbabwe, members of the rural district council and some local leaders from the Village Development Committee. A total of 30 respondents were targeted using this method from the Rural District Council (RDC) and Care Zimbabwe which was the implementing agent, to assess the partnership, effectiveness, strength and weakness of these partners in promoting community participation in rural development projects. The selection of recipients was based on knowledge gleaned from consultation with Care Zimbabwe and the respective government department.

In this research, 60 structured questionnaires were distributed to 60 households from a community of 70 households, thus forming an 86% sample size. The sample was less than 100 since the researcher was using households rather than individuals. Therefore, the households had relevant and adequate information about the project since the beneficiaries' list was based on household as an entity. This also helped in ensuring variability in perceptions and responses as could not have been done by randomly selecting 100 respondents who would only emerge from 10 households for instance. As such the sample size was rich since each household had at least more than 2 people who were also beneficiaries and participants in this particular project. This was based on a simple random sampling which accords a chance for every household to be selected. Households were drawn from pieces of single numbers enclosed in a container. Each

household was represented by a corresponding number using the compound residential number. 60 numbers were therefore picked from 70 numbers in the container to form the sample size.

The primary target respondent in the household was the household head. In the absence of the household head, the wife or elder child was interviewed. It emerged from the field survey that there were some child-headed households and in this case the elder child would be the respondent. This did not present problems because participation in this particular project was on the basis of household as unit.

#### **2.4.0 Qualitative data**

Qualitative research is concerned primarily with the process rather than the outcome, which is how people make sense of their lives, experiences and their structure of their world (Creswell, 1994). The researcher used this method to assess opinions, attitudes and perceptions of people in the case study area.

A variety of methods such as focus group discussions and semi-structured-interviews were used in order to gather a variety of data.

#### **2.4.1 Literature review**

The researcher conducted a literature review using both primary and secondary data. The literature review focused on the existing body of knowledge and information on issues of community participation and rural development.

#### **2.4.2 Semi-structured interviews**

Semi-structured interviews entail the use of open-ended questions as an interview guide in an attempt to gather more in-depth information relating to the research problem (Babbie and Mouton, 2001). Therefore interviews with key informants were conducted in this research. This method was used to get information from institutions and organizations involved in projects implementation in Mushagashe Communal Area. Traditional leaders and local authority representatives were interviewed as part of local leadership because they were more influential in directing the project and making some

decisions for the community. So they were a rich source of information especially with regards to how their political affiliation would influence community participation outcomes. Special attention was given to rules and by-laws governing project implementation in the area as enshrined in the Rural District Councils Act. This also included policy issues related to community participation in project implementation in the area. However, it should be noted that this particular data collection tool had its demerits, for example it was limited in that respondents could avoid sensitive questions and in turn tainted the relevance of the findings relative to the objectives. As a consequence, this was circumvented by the use of other data collection instruments such as Focus Group Discussions (FGDs).

### **2.4.3 Focus Group Discussions**

At list three focus group discussions were undertaken with stakeholders during the course of the research. The participants comprised local people from the community; field officers and programme managers from CARE Zimbabwe as a facilitating agent and officers from the Masvingo Rural District Council. These three groups of respondents ensured variability in thinking and therefore responses. This strategy ensured cross-fertilization of information. Selection of participants in the discussions was based on a 50:50 gender composition to ensure that participatory development related issues associated with both men and woman were captured. This went even as far as helping in evaluating the level of awareness of participatory development among participants of different sexes.

Questions for the focus groups were formulated around the participants' understanding of community participation, levels of participation, and obstacles or challenges to existing community participation initiatives and suggestions and recommendations for the improvement of community participation processes. FDGs had an advantage that by engaging the participants in a focused discussion, they had uninhibited latitude to flesh out their views which they would neither do in semi-structured interviews nor be observed by the researcher. Moreover, the researcher had an ample opportunity to probe further for clarity which could not be effectively done in questionnaires. As such this

merit was a counter to the limitation of other research instruments which did not have the same advantages.

### **2.5.0 Ethical Considerations**

As a matter of principle, the researcher observed some research ethics during the course of this research. The researcher sought permission from all stakeholders and participants before embarking on the research. The researcher also ensured confidence in the respondents such that they willingly divulge reliable information; the researcher sought informed consent from all stakeholders and informed the respondents that they should give information voluntarily; and that they were free to withdraw at any time of the research. The researcher also ensured confidentiality by giving the respondents pseudonyms as a way of maintaining anonymity. The respondents were informed that the data was for academic purposes only and their responses were to be kept secure for confidential record keeping and that they should also keep the information to themselves since it is for the same academic purposes. The researcher also informed the respondents that he would report back to the respondents.

### **2.6.0 Research Procedure**

The following procedure was applied in order to collect qualitative and quantitative data:

- ✚ The researcher first developed a set of semi-structured and structured questions in terms of broader conceptual framework of the study.
- ✚ Questions were translated into the local language of the community (Shona, Ndebele and Shangani) through the formal translation office at Great Zimbabwe University's African Languages Department in Masvingo.
- ✚ The researcher consulted all the relevant stakeholders such as Care Zimbabwe, RDC and the local people of Mushagashe community
- ✚ Participates were selected with the consultation of project coordinators and community leaders in the case study area.

### **2.6.1 Data analysis and documentation**

In order to carefully capture and manage the data, the researcher used a recording device, tape recorder; and this was supported with accurate field notes that were recorded throughout the fieldwork stage. The raw data was coded, processed and analyzed by using the Statistics Program for Social Science (SPSS) and finally presented in the form of written textual quotes, graphs and tables. With regards information obtained from the FGDs, the information was organized and analyzed manually. I picked out the important themes and their degree of emphasis that underlie participants' comments with regard to the study. The researcher also borrowed Arnstein's (1969) 'Ladder of Citizen Participation' and the Project Management Cycle in order to develop some variables that would be used to assess the opportunities, nature and levels of community participation in the Small Dams Rehabilitation Project activities in Mushagashe.

### **2.6.2 Limitations of the study**

I did not face many major challenges in the research process. The only hindrance was my inability to get the time and attention of target respondents in households for interview. This was because the research period coincided with the winter wheat farming season in the study area. Therefore, the ideal time to get respondents was in the evening when they return from their farms. However, during this time some people felt they needed rest and were unwilling to participate. But since sampling technique was accidentally based on respondents' willingness and availability, it did not affect the quality of our data in any way. However, I used five additional days to complete data collection.

Secondly, the problem of translation from the local language such as Shona, Ndebele and Shangani was also a major constraint. Problems were experienced in accurately translating the participants' terminology in their own languages. However, I was helped by the African Languages Department at Great Zimbabwe University to translate.

Thirdly, during the field survey process, there was inability to contact some of the RDC officials because they were preoccupied with preparing reports for the oncoming end of the second quarter of their local government term.

Despite these limitations, the researcher is confident that the lessons drawn from the study serves as a point of departure for other research on the topic. The findings of this investigation will also give insight to Care Zimbabwe and other development partners in their efforts towards effective participatory community development.

## **Chapter 3**

### **3.1.0 Theoretical background and conceptualizing development**

#### **3.1.1 Introduction**

As noted by many scholars (Chambers, 1992; Todaro 2000 and Swanepoel, 2000), previous development approaches were mechanistic and their strategies were focused on piecemeal development. These strategies and approaches failed to include the views and contributions of the local people and this has resulted in the local people's failure to feel as equal partners in development efforts. This seeming inadequacy of previous development paradigms to honor indigenous people's contribution has given rise to an alternative and more inclusive 'people centred' development approach.

Accordingly, this chapter will first briefly discuss the theoretical aspects of development. The traditional classical development, theories both modernization and dependency and alternative approaches such as the participatory, people centred development approach will be compared and discussed. Lastly, this section will be focused on the idea of, and reasons for, the rise of community participation discourse in development theory.

#### **3.1.2 Development**

Development is a multidimensional and complex term which several authors have attempted to define from different perspectives (Allen & Thomas, 2000; Coetzee et al, 2001; Todaro, 2000; Chambers, 1996).

According to Coetzee (2001:120) development means "...the connotation of favorable change moving from worse to better; evolving from simple to complex; advancing away from the inferior...a form of social change that will lead to progress...the process of enlarging people's choices, acquiring knowledge, and having access to resources for a decent standard of living". Allen and Thomas (2000:24) state that development is an "all encompassing change, not just an improvement in one aspect." Todaro (2000:85) adds that development is "a multidimensional process involving major changes in social structures, popular attitudes, and national institutions, as well as the acceleration of

economic growth, the reduction of inequality, and eradication of absolute poverty”. What is imperative in these articulations is that regardless of the variation in conceptualization and scope of the term, all definitions carry connotations of positive transformation, from undesirable to desirable state of affairs and in the political, social, economic and technological realms.

### **3.2.0 Theoretical Framework**

This research shall be informed by the People Centered Development (PCD) paradigm as propounded by Chambers (1992). Its point of departure is the assumption that society is shrouded in suffering and oppression (Muther, 2004). Thus the goal of this theory is to ‘free’ the communities from the cradles of domination and oppression. By being dominated and oppressed, the communities are not able to participate in development projects, a situation which is obtaining in current development endeavors (Kottack, 2001; Gukurume and Nhodo, 2010). As such, this perspective questions whether past and current practices address social justice and empowerment. It is from this background that this research proceeded from within this theoretical framework since the theory explicitly demonstrates commitment to the full realization of effective community involvement in any development efforts aimed at improving the living conditions of the community.

#### **3.2.1 Classical development theories**

#### **3.2.2 Modernization theory**

Modernization theory was one of the most popular development theories of social transformation from World War II to the end of the 1960’s. The theory stems from the ideas of Durkheim, Weber and Parsons who explained the transformation from traditional to modern societies in terms of population growth with its division of labor; individual inspiration and the change of moral values and norms (Evans & Stephens, 1998).

Coetzee (2001:27) notes that “...the central ideas of modernization theory’s developmental logic of economic growth in general and industrialization, in particular,

will impel societies towards a particular direction of change”. The theory implies that the first world industrial countries are modern and the third world countries are traditional and backward. It also regards development as a progressive change from traditional to the more sophisticated modern society (Simpson, 1987). According to modernization theorists, all traditional values, attitudes, practices and social structures will be replaced with more modern ones (Swanepoel, 2000).

According to Evans and Stephens (1998) the basic principle of modernization theory is that development is possible and to achieve it, developing nations should copy the Western European experience, which was characterised by a set of stages in which development took place. Modernization theorists advocate the propagation of western institutions and standards into the third world countries as a means of promoting development (Coetzee, 2001; Graff & Venter, 2001; Swanepoel, 2000). With the objective of promoting development, considerable effort and a large amount of aid as well as technical assistance was provided to these countries.

however, the modernization prescriptions have translated into the opposite of what was expected as highlighted by Turock (2004:64) who submits that “...development aid in most Third World countries has failed to transform into tangible outcomes, demonstrating the hypocrisy of such actions, especially that the benevolence was never genuine from the onset”. This further consolidated by Kottack (1998) who posits that, in most developing countries modernization prescription has undermined the capacity of these nations to develop through a distinctively different path from that of the Western countries. He further highlights that, its major setback was the disregarding of the indigenous knowledge systems through refuting for instance African traditional cultures as antithetical to development. One can argue that, though the modernization theory was not inclined towards a participatory orientation from the onset, its castigation of the indigenous knowledge systems of a particular society methodologically implied its top-down style which in any case demonstrates its disregard of the significance of the contributions of the local people who happen to be the recipients of the outcomes of any imposed development efforts. For example, in Zimbabwe, the modernization prescriptions manifested in the form of Economic Structural Adjustment Program

(ESAP) in the early 1990s, which was a package from the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank aimed at coercing the independent government to liberalize the market, remove subsidies and cutting on government expenditure (Makumbe, 1998). These recommendations resulted in the opposite of what they sought to remedy as highlighted by Kanyenze (2004:45) that, as a result of ESAP, there was high unemployment due to massive retrenchments; the folding of small industries since they could not stand competition from already established Multinational Corporations; and there was also high infant mortality rates due to inaccessibility of health facilities after privatization. Kanyenze (2004) argues that, this program failed because the local people did not have feelings of ownership since they were not treated as equal partners in its formulation hence it was an imposition. This did not only culminate in doubt over the theory's applicability as a perfect model of development, but prompted the need for alternative explanations of development such as the dependency theory in a bid to appraise the modernization theory's inadequacies.

### **3.2.3 Dependency theory**

Dependency theory evolved as a result of the criticism of modernization theory in the 1970s and 1980s. According to Servaes (1990), the theoretical basis for dependency theory emerged from bringing together two intellectual traditions, one rooted in Neo-Marxism or structuralism and the other in the extensive Latin American debate on development that ultimately formed the ECLA tradition (The United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America). Servaes (1990) states that Baran was one of the first to articulate development and underdevelopment as inter-related processes, that is that they are two sides of the same coin. In Baran's view continued imperialist dependence after the end of the colonial period is ensured first and foremost by the reproduction of socio-economic and political structures at the periphery in accordance with the interest of the centre powers. Similarly, Frank (1969) contended that the spread of capitalism from First World Countries had a destructive influence on Third World Countries. The capitalist endeavors in the wealthier, core countries, actively underdeveloped poorer, peripheral countries (Wood, 2001: 81). According to Davids (2005:16) "... since the 2nd World War until the late 1980s the attention of academics concerned with development

was essentially locked into a conflictual discourse between the proponents of the major opposing streams of development thinking, namely modernization and dependency”. Despite the fact that these theories have opposing philosophical and ideological points of departure, they are both prescriptive in nature and both propose oversimplified macro solutions to the development problematic of less developed countries hence the need for an alternative paradigm which is more pragmatic.

### **3.2.4 Alternative development approaches and people-centred development**

The failure of the above-mentioned competing paradigms made development theorists and practitioners realize that development cannot be studied or brought about by merely concentrating on broad theories and macro strategies. It became clear that development had to become more human-centred, focusing more on people and the community at a micro level. People increasingly became the focus of development to such an extent that people-centred development became the buzzword of the 1990s and 21st century.

The People-Centred Development (PCD) approach mainly supports the involvement of all stakeholders in the process of development (Bryant and White, 1982; Oakley, 1992; Burkey, 1993; Rahman, 1993; Roodt, 2001). Korten (1990) refers to a people-driven approach as one which emphasizes the interest of local communities with people in control of their own resources and having the means to hold the officials of government accountable. Roodt (2001) defines people-centred development as placing emphasis on the importance of the majority of the population especially the previously excluded such as women, the youth and the illiterate in the process of development. The involvement of the majority of the population is considered the foundation for the successful implementation and sustainability of any development programme or project. The involvement of the people at grassroots level includes that the population should have a say in decisions affecting their lives and that their contributions to development processes should influence the quality of their lives. Makumbe (1998:67) submits that, “...the negative effects of the colonial administration in Zimbabwe have prompted the independent government to ensure the need for effective citizen participation through decentralization policy”. He further notes that this citizen participation was enabled

through establishment of local government which was meant to be more directly close to communities and this was operationalized through Acts of parliament such as the Urban Councils Act and the Rural District Councils Act. It is therefore justified to claim that Zimbabwean government has the legislative and policy framework for effective institutionalization of local participation in any development efforts by both state and non-state actors.

### **3.3.0 Conceptualization of terms**

#### **3.3.1 Participation**

There are diverse perspectives of participation in development projects, which reflect in many cases differences in objectives for which participation is advocated. Oakley (1992) and Burkey (1993) cited in Theron (2005) note that participation is primarily an umbrella term for a new form of development intervention and is essentially a self-transformation process and a pro-active learning-by-doing exercise. Although numerous authors have sought to review the wide range of definitions of participation in development projects, the operational definitions expounded by Paul (1987) and Rahman (1993) cited in Penderis (1996:127) capture the essence of the participation debate.

“Community participation is an active process by which beneficiary client groups influence the direction, execution of a development project with a view to enhancing their well being in terms of income, personal growth, self reliance or other values that they cherish” (Paul, 1987).

“...participatory development is an educational and empowering process in which people in partnership with other and with those able to assist them, identify problems and needs, mobilize resources, assume responsibility themselves to plan, manage and control and assess the individual and collective actions that they themselves decide upon” (Rahman, 1993).

### **3.3.2 Community**

The word "community" is derived from the Old French *communité* which is derived from the Latin *communitas cum*, "with/together", a broad term for fellowship or organized society (Kottack, 1996: 9). What is striking in this definition is the acknowledgement of the collectivism or partnership that characterizes a community. Digby (1968) views community as a place in which people live (such as a village or city), or a population group with similar characteristics (such as rural villagers or older people), or as a concern, which people share in common (such as religious freedom or status or women). It also is customary to view community in reference to social relations characterized by personal intimacy, emotional depth, social cohesion and continuity in time (Kottack, 1998). It is this notion which informs and qualifies the conceptualization of a community with reference to a group of people living together with a common attachment to their interests and place of residence. Therefore, one would be justified to deduce that, the primary reason for the criticisms against the modernization theory as a model of development was its repudiation and replacement of this societal value of communism or partnership which implied mutual reciprocity, with competition and individualism as exhibited in capitalism. The remedy for this error has been sought in the People Centered Approach to development, which glorifies the involvement and participation of the grassroots in any development endeavor if it is to sustainably empower communities. As such, the concept of community is important because it delimits the extent to which it is fundamental for development agents to collaboratively work 'together' or 'with' communities for real development to take place.

### **3.3.3 Processes of participation**

It is also noteworthy to mention that the propensity for participation to result in greater gains for beneficiaries also depends on the processes and the degree of engagement of communities in decision-making. As already discussed, there are various levels and degrees at which participation occurs that is, from manipulation, or pseudo-participation, to the community being in control of decisions. Most community participation exercises are largely pseudo-participation, where ordinary people have mostly become endorsees of pre-designed projects. In other words, community participation is seen more as a

mere ceremonial presence of participants in local institutions without their active involvement in any decision making process (Williams, 2006). Research has shown that the degree and nature of participation by local communities very much influences the outcome of participation. Hoddinott (2002), for instance, reported that failure to delegate true decision-making authority, where citizens have real control over decisions, may result in beneficiaries being reluctant to act, because of concerns that they will be subsequently overruled. Mobilization of people in communities builds relationships and networks necessary to ensure meaningful participation in development projects. Hence, in order to ensure the success of development projects through meaningful participation, it is prudent to involve various groups in the community, such as women, youth groups and the like, in the decision-making process.

#### **3.4.0 Community Participation: A Conceptual Framework**

The definition of participation is one of the most problematic issues in development discourse. The term is complex, broad and essentially contestable. It has sparked a great deal of debate and controversy among think tanks in the development discourse and no agreement has been reached yet on the actual conceptualization of community participation. To this end, the World Bank (1996) has argued that, participation is a rich concept that means different things to different people in different settings. As such, different scholars have thus advanced different meanings. But, however, given the complexity of community participation it is necessary to firstly grapple with the terms “community” and “participation” in their individual capacity to best explain the concept of community participation. Wates (2000:184) has thus defined a “community” as a group of people sharing common interests and living within a geographically defined area. Thus a community generally has two certain elements, that is, physical boundary and social interests common among the people. Important to note here is that the word “community” has both social and spatial dimensions and that generally the people within a community come together to achieve a common objective, even if they have certain differences.

With regards to ‘participation’ Wates (2000:194) defines it as the act of being involved in something. He further opines that, participation can either represent assigning certain

decisive roles to the users, where they share the decision-making responsibility with the professionals. The other type of participation is where there is no shift of responsibilities between the users and professionals but instead only the opinion of the user is considered while making decisions. Therefore, given such a clarification of terminologies surrounding the concept of community participation it is, therefore, relatively easy to conceptualize community participation in development process.

Rahman (1993) has defined community participation as an active process in which the participants take initiatives and take action that is stimulated by their own thinking and deliberation and over which they can exert effective control. Important to note here is that such an approach instills a sense of ownership and responsibility towards the programme, and in turn leads to sustainability of programmes (Chambers 1992). A more related definition of community participation is given by Brown (2000) who has regarded community participation as the active process by which beneficiaries influence the direction and the execution of the project rather than merely being consulted or receiving the share of the benefits. The World Bank (1996) has given a slightly different definition of participation when it views participation as a process through which stakeholders influence and share control over development initiatives and the decisions and resources which affect them. Wolfe cited in Goulet (1989) seems to conform to the above explanation. He views participation as “the organized efforts to increase control over resources and groups and movements hitherto excluded from such control.” (Goulet, 1989:24)

### **3.5.0 Arnstein’s ladder of citizen participation**

Arnstein (1969) developed a typology of eight levels of participation which could be helpful in the analysis and understanding of participation. For illustrative purposes the eight types were arranged in a ladder pattern with each rung corresponding to the extent of citizens' power in determining the end product. Although this was an ideal model at a national scale, it could also be applicable at a micro scale or community level since the relationship between power and participation is pervasive at any level.

**Figure 1. Eight rungs on the ladder of citizen participation**

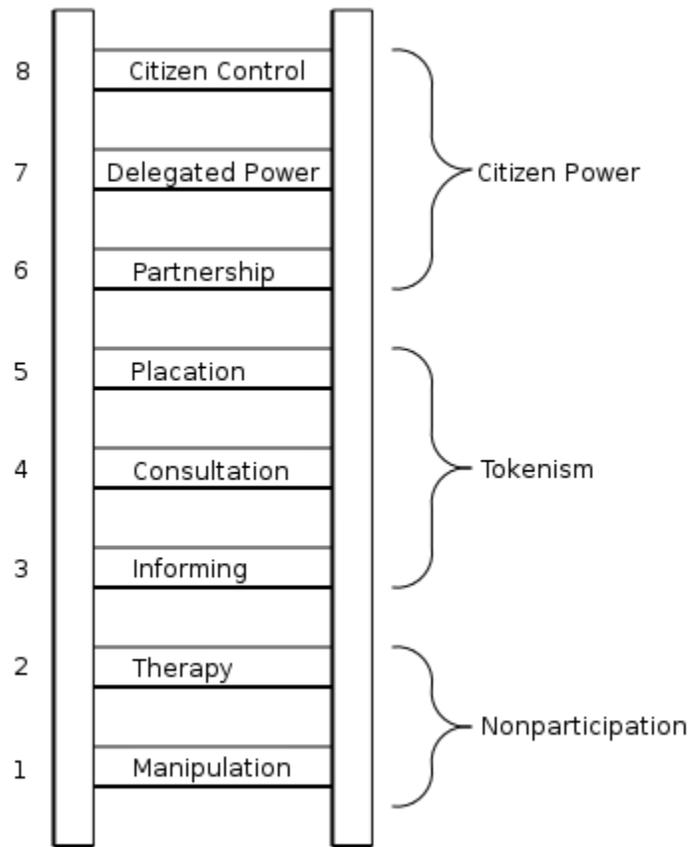


Diagram Adopted from Arnstein (1969)

The bottom rungs of the ladder are (1) Manipulation and (2) Therapy. These two rungs describe levels of "non-participation" that have been contrived by some to substitute for genuine participation. Their real objective is not to enable people to participate in planning or conducting programs, but to enable power holders to "educate" or "cure" the participants (Arnstein, 1969). Rungs 3 and 4 progress to levels of "tokenism" that allow the have-nots to hear and to have a voice: (3) Informing and (4) Consultation. When they are proffered by power holders as the total extent of participation, citizens may indeed hear and be heard. But under these conditions they lack the power to insure that their views will be heeded by the powerful. When participation is restricted to these levels, there is no follow-through, no "muscle," hence no assurance of changing the

status quo. Rung (5) Placation is simply a higher level tokenism because the ground rules allow have-nots to advise, but retain for the power holders the continued right to decide.

Further up the ladder are levels of citizen power with increasing degrees of decision-making power. Citizens can enter into a (6) Partnership that enables them to negotiate and engage in trade-offs with traditional power holders. At the topmost rungs, (7) Delegated Power and (8) Citizen Control, have-not citizens obtain the majority of decision-making seats, or full managerial power.

### **3.6.0 Project Management Cycle**

A project management cycle is a model used by various stakeholders to manage projects. It has different phases that are crucial in giving a project the necessary direction for the attainment of its objectives. Each phase comprise of different activities that need to be undertaken in order to achieve the intended goals. The researcher adopted this to establish a basis upon which these phases acted as variables for assessing the opportunities, nature and extent of community participation in this particular project. This research used four phases namely, identification, planning, implementation and monitoring and evaluation.

#### **3.6.1 Identification**

In this phase, the research aimed at assessing the levels of participation by the local people in choosing their area of interest since there were many possible small dams to be rehabilitated in the area. The research used the number of participants in this particular phase as a determination factor of the level of participation. The data was solicited through the questionnaires. Besides the number of participants, the research also made follow up questions in the questionnaire and semi-structured interviews to probe further for other possible reasons for either participation or non-participation by the respondents who were the participants. This was the case for all phases of the project.

### **3.6.2 Planning**

In this phase participants were expected to be part of the planning team in which they were supposed to map the direction of the project. The research again used the number of participants who contributed in defining the project activities and the time frame for completion of the project.

### **3.6.3 Implementation**

Participants in this phase were supposed to be part of team to be directly involved in the various activities though with the help of experts in the field of construction since most of the activities were technical. However, the research looked for the involvement of the local people in such activities as ensuring the security of the materials, carrying various materials to the dam site, mixing concrete and overall management of the project.

### **3.6.4 Monitoring and Evaluation**

The research expected the participants to be part of the monitoring and evaluation team to assess the progress against the objectives and the time frame for completion. This would be effective with the community involved in that it would help avoid suspicion over alterations of certain activities by implementing agent alone.

## **Chapter Four**

### **4.1.0 Literature review**

#### **4.1.1 Participatory Development Debate**

“Participation” and its companion concepts “sustainability” and “empowerment” are at the centre of contemporary development discourse (Michener, 1998). White (1996) writes that no respectable project can be funded without provision for participation, while Gardner and Lewis (1996:199) state that participation “has now become so ever-present in development jargon as to be often virtually without meaning”. Where has this concern for participation arisen from?

It may be argued that participation as a concept may be as old as democracy itself. However, in development, it began emerging in the 1960-70s in the ideas of Paulo Freire (1972), Fals Borda (1969; 1972) and Rahman (1993). Freire argues that “development can only be achieved when humans are ‘beings for themselves’, when they possess their own decision-making powers, free of oppressive and dehumanizing circumstances; it is the ‘struggle to be more fully human’” (Freire, 1972: 29). Chambers brought participation into mainstream development by emphasizing Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) (1993, 1994, and 1997). PRA includes participatory mapping and modeling (for example asking village communities to map their environment, asking them how they perceive their own situations such as health, education, poverty and well-being, and involving them in producing seasonal calendars to understand their needs better). Other methods include interviews and focus groups, with the difference being that these are conducted by “insiders” rather than outsiders (Chambers, 1992). For Chambers, participation is where “the positivist, reductionist, mechanistic, standardized-package, top-down models and development blueprints are rejected, and in which multiple, local, and individual realities are recognized, accepted, enhanced and celebrated”(Chambers, 1992: 188). However, it is argued that this emancipatory nature was somewhat hijacked into supporting development projects, where participation, rather than the end in itself, became a means to an end (the development project) (Hickey and Mohan, 2004; Leal and Opp, 2005).

From the 1990s to the current era, Hickey and Mohan (2004) find that a more institutional approach to participation has appeared, with initiatives such as participatory budgeting and participatory poverty assessments. It is argued that such “planner-centered” participation is more about an efficient mechanism for delivering a development project and reducing cost, rather than a genuine understanding of a community’s needs (Mosse, 2001; Nelson and Wright, 1995). Indeed, throughout the development literature, it is difficult to find a clear definition of what “participation” actually is. For example, the World Bank defines participation as “a process by which people, especially disadvantaged people, influence decisions that affect them” (World Bank, 1992: 177). It states “as participation increases, vital information not in the public domain becomes available and the voices of interested parties can help make governments more accountable; both in turn enhance performance” (World Bank, 1992:3). However, it still doesn’t define *how* that participation will actually take place.

As such, the concept of participatory development has emerged to be a matter on which there is considerable disagreement among development scholars and practitioners. In fact, scholars have agreed to disagree on the contribution of community participation in rural development. Some have gone to the extent of questioning the validity of the concept in current development discourse, while others hail it as a panacea to achieve sustainable development in communities. As a result of these differences in view-points, current accounts of participation suffer from a lack of understanding and what it expects to achieve. Such a situation has been frequently steeped in ideological debate, which further mystifies and romanticizes the concept, making practical application even more problematic. However, despite the lack of consensus on the importance of and a conceptual framework for participation, it has remained a key theme in development discourse. As such various views have been put forward by different scholars in a bid to unpack the concept as it relates to project sustainability.

Amongst the eminent scholars in rural development is Robert Chambers who is believed to be the chief proponent of the current participatory development model in operation in the development discourse. Chambers has grappled with the concept of community

participation very well. He is totally opposed to the top-down approach that development agencies have been using. Chambers (1992) has noted that the 1970s development approaches as propounded by the neo-Fabians and the neo-liberals embody *“a planner’s core, centre-outwards, top-down view of rural development. They start with the economies, not people; with the macro not the micro; with the view from the office not the field. And in consequence their prescription tend to be uniform, standard and for universal application”* (Chambers, 1992: 23).

He therefore, advocates for a bottom-up approach where the emphasis is on the community as an active participant in development projects. He believes that a critical mass and momentum was reached in the 1990s that enables the rise and the spread of participatory rural appraisal techniques. To him, community participation offers a means of empowering the poor, the marginalized and the disenfranchised in societies in the design and implementation of programs without external influence or pressure. The role of the agencies is that of facilitating not to influence decisions in the life of community development initiatives. He, therefore, has a vision of a participatory approach to development problems that is led by the grassroots, and includes the perspectives of all stakeholders. In his view, rather than a one-sided extraction process by external evaluators, local stakeholders are empowered to choose and define procedures and methods in their own terms (Chambers, 1992). Thus he champions the exulting of the locals to the first position in the development process who in this case have been viewed as the last and fit to receive development rather than initiate it. With this thrust of putting the first last, he presents a new exciting and practical agenda for sustainable rural development (Chambers, 1992).

However, Chambers’ works on participatory development are not without criticisms. Though he has been dubbed the ‘godfather’ of participatory development management model, he takes community participation for granted to such an extent that he oversimplifies matters. In his PRA concept as a tool to achieve participatory development he overlooked complex power relations within communities and present an unrealistic view of group behavior and dynamics. Cooke and Kothari (2001) confirmed the above argument when they said, that the emphasis on participation obscures many

limitations and manipulations that suppress power differentials. These power differences actually translate into tag-of-war which does no good to effective participation. Furthermore, they note that Chambers was unaware of the machinations of capitalism in all its forms that work against participation.

They go on to acknowledge that, his point that agencies should be facilitators was not well thought out, because he failed to realize that these very same agencies that purport to facilitate project implementation often hijack community programs and sometimes report in their own format to donors, misrepresenting facts for them to get further funding. This claim however, needs to be qualified as well, a deliberation which renders their criticism of Chambers porous. As Cooke and Kothari (2001) point out, external agendas can easily be presented as local needs by project facilitators and the process of participation can be employed to legitimize donor priorities by rubber-stamping or manufacturing community consent. Cooke and Kothari (2001) see the idea of participatory development as flawed, idealistic or naïve.

The above scholars are wary of the mechanical acceptance of participatory approaches to development. As such, their works produces a counterbalance to the context of contemporary development thinking that treats participation as a panacea to sustainable development. They have challenged the pervasive belief that participation is unequivocally good. They have gone to the extent of likening participation to a tyrant. To them, participation creates false illusions of empowerment while at the same time reinforcing norms and existing power hierarchies. Responding to Chambers' argument that participation empowers the community to make decisions on the issues that affect them, Cooke and Kothari (2001) hold the view that decision-making control is held in theory and not in practice since this remains a prerogative of the elite in a given setting. As such it is alien to the community in practical terms. These two are particularly concerned by the lack of attention to power structures at the micro-level and feels that the focus on the local can exacerbate existing inequalities because the production and representation of knowledge is inseparable from the exercise of power.

The above argument by Cooke and Kothari is, therefore, a clear challenge to current practice to create real space for the poor to voice their views. However, in as much as

Cooke and Kothari might have a point to prove in their assessment of community participation they are rather too radical. They only criticize without giving a possible alternative to development thinking. One would think that Cooke and Kothari suggest possible ways of accommodating the locals in the development process rather than grilling the process without replacing it with an alternative concept.

Williams has also contributed his views in this debate on community participation. Williams (2004) challenges current models of empowerment that are implicit in the literature on participatory development. He neatly encapsulates the major issues with Chambers' idealized vision of participatory development. Williams stresses the need for development practitioners to engage with the political aspects of development and recognize that empowerment is an inherently political struggle. He maintains that it is naïve to ignore the political nature of participation and rely on idealized narratives of communal behavior that understate power and politics. For Williams, the pursuit of participation is politically motivated and he is equally reluctant to give in to Chambers' romanticism or Kothari's bleak standpoint. Unlike Kothari whose critique does not offer an alternative view of development, Williams illustrates that far from being a redundant concept, participation can be genuinely transformative with positive outcomes for all participants. However, Williams' weakness is that he is not sure of his position. He at some point agrees with Chambers, another point agrees with Kothari, and as such, readers may get lost on the pros and cons of the concept of participation. Therefore, because of this observation the researcher hopes to give an independent account of the concept that is not based on other scholars' views but the communities themselves.

#### **4.1.2 International Conventions Guiding the Use of Participatory Approach**

Although previous developmental assumptions disregarded community participation in developmental initiatives, there has been a marked change as international legislative and policy instruments consider it central and an imperative aspect which needs to be part of any development endeavor. A quantifiable look at the various legislative instruments shows that community participation has gained recognition at the international level. Among the conventions include the Rio Declaration, Agenda 21, Convention on Biodiversity (CBD), Convention to Combat Desertification and the

World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) or Johannesburg Declaration (2002) among others. The Rio Declaration (1992) makes it unambiguously clear that, rural communities, their knowledge and traditions are pivotal in the attainment of sustainable development. Principle 22 Of the declaration states that;

*“Indigenous people and their communities have a vital role in environmental management and development because of their knowledge and traditional practices. States should recognize and duly support their identity, culture and interests and enable their effective participation in the achievement of sustainable development”. (Journal for Social Development 1994:21)*

Agenda 21 covers issues on indigenous people and sustainable development in general. Chapter 26 provides that there has to be recognition of indigenous values, traditional knowledge and resource management practices with a view to promoting environmentally sound sustainable development. Ramots'oari (1998) observed that in essence Agenda 21 calls for smart partnership arrangements between the government, indigenous peoples and their communities. Mayet (2002) argues that the Convention on Biodiversity (CBD) is the first international treaty to acknowledge the vital role of traditional knowledge, innovations and practices in conserving and using biodiversity. It thus acknowledges the role that community participation has in sustainable development.

The World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) also sings the same song of putting the local people first in developmental initiatives for the realization of sustainable development (UNDP 2004). However, in as much as the international community has legitimized community participation through the enactment of various conventions but, in reality organizations are devoting much of their time talking about it rather than implementing it. Of particular importance here is that these international legislative instruments are mere instruments that only legalize community participation but they do not explain how this participation should be done on the ground. Furthermore, organizations and governments seem to give deaf ears to the participation of communities in development since these conventions are mere conventions that do not have mechanisms to punish member states in case a member fails to comply with the

conventions. Hence it is necessary to embark on this task of researching about the concept of community participation in sustainable development so as to further conscientise the various stakeholders in development on the importance of community participation in development especially in Zimbabwe which happens to be a signatory to most of these international conventions. This would provide a better framework upon which effective institutionalization of community participation can be operationalized.

#### **4.1.3 Legal and Policy Context for local Participation in Zimbabwe since 1980**

The attainment of independence saw the government of Zimbabwe adopting a socialist path to development since socialism influenced the struggle for independence (Mutwira, 1996). Given that the new government took over from a racist and capitalist government that had not been respecting the concerns of the black rural people, the newly formed government was faced with the biggest task of integrating people into the development process, particularly the local people in their respective localities. Therefore, preceding policies by government were coined in such a manner that was thought to be accommodative of the local people in the development process (Makumbe, 1992). This was through devolution of authority to local district councils, but whether the enactment of these policies meant total participation or not is another story.

Prew (2004) notes that, from 1980 to 1988, the system of rural local government comprised the poorly resourced District Councils in the Communal Areas administered in terms of the District Councils Act of 1980 and the richer Rural Councils in the commercial farming areas. In the communal areas, the councils were less equipped in terms of qualified administrative personnel and information which logistically rendered them inefficient relative to service delivery, whilst in the commercial areas the councils were fully equipped from type writers, stationery, communication and information network and vehicles (Mutwira, 1996:67). The period since 1988 has seen the amalgamation of Rural Councils and District Councils through the Rural District Councils Act to establish what became to be known as Rural District Councils (RDCs). The latter have been empowered to plan developmental initiatives in their areas because they would be easily backed by the government on the basis of race since these were institutions meant to define white superiority over development issues (Mutwira,

1999:69). The establishment of RDCs was followed by the restructuring of the administration of rural areas. The express objective of this was to ensure that planning would begin “at the lowest level and not (be) imposed from above” (Government of Zimbabwe, 1990:2). In this case, the central government devolved power to the RDCs to take decisions regarding development in their areas and these were initial efforts towards a bottom up approach to development.

Just immediately after the attainment of independence President Mugabe remarked that “Government is determined to embark on policies and programs designed to involve fully in the development process the entire people who are the beginning and end of society, the very asset of the country and the *raison d’être* of government” (Government of Zimbabwe, 1990: 3). This remark was followed by numerous deliberate policies that ensured the participation of communities in development processes. For example, in 1984 Robert Mugabe issued a directive to establish planning structures from village level to national level to ensure a more participatory and bottom-up approach to development planning. This saw a creation of Ward Development Committees (WARDCOs) and Village Development Committees (VIDCOs) (Mutwira, 1999). These aimed at facilitating participation in development programs from grassroots level. It is important to note that a WARDCO is led by a politically elected councilor and it follows that the elected official often come with party developmental projects to the people instead of listening to what his constituency needs. As such the Party comes first and people then follow. The same situation applies to VIDCOs which are led by the chairpersons. So instead of being a bottom-up approach the whole process has lost its initial mandate since what is on the White Paper is not what is on the ground. Thus community participation has remained rhetoric and not a reality (Makumbe, 2004).

Nevertheless this was one giant-step towards the decentralization process. The year 2000 when the country was at the height of political tension between the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) and Zimbabwe African National Union (Patriotic Front) (ZANUPF) also saw the government enacting the Traditional Leaders Act which sought to strengthen the role of traditional leaders over local planning and development issues. The Traditional Leaders Act (2000) gave the chiefs, headmen, and village heads the

powers to co-ordinate development in their areas. To co-ordinate development literally means traditional leaders are supposed to work with the people in ensuring sustainable development in their respective areas. This Act gives traditional leaders a wide range of powers in the planning process.

However, since the traditional leaders are widely responsible in the planning process, it therefore means that, in a developmental project the locals are only implementers of an already designed project. As such, that project is more vulnerable to failure because of the inadequacy of beneficiary involvement from the planning to implementation stage. Furthermore, developmental initiatives spearheaded by traditional leaders are subject to selective participation because of political affiliation, since the whole institution of traditional leaders has been politicized by the government. This scenario is a nemesis to project sustainability since community participation entails total involvement of all the people regardless of political affiliation if Eade's (2000) principle of 'equal partnership' is taken into account, that stakeholders should treat each other equally to avoid hegemonic participation.

Planning in Zimbabwe is usually initiated at national or district level to achieve national or district objectives (Makumbe, 2004). It is important to underscore that government policy on community participation is multi-sectoral. Under its policy on the environment the government instituted the Communal Areas Management Program for Indigenous Resources (CAMPFIRE). The premise of the initiative was that local populations have an economic stake in the conservation of wildlife. Thus local participation is used as a tactic to fulfill national conservation objectives. However, the whole process has come under fire for not taking community participation seriously. Makumbe (2004:60) argues that, conservation institutions developed at national level are inserted into the existing administrative framework at the village and district level. Essentially this is a top-down approach which is alien to community participation.

Besides the above stated legislations as enacted by the government, the Zimbabwean government has also a clear-cut policy on decentralization whose main objective has been to effect the legislated transfer of functions from central government to local authorities and in the process redefine the role of central government in the provision

and administration of services and infrastructure at provincial, district and community level (District Councils Act of 1980). The policy is administered by the Ministry of Local Government, Public Works and National Housing. The policy re-aligns the centre as it changes the role of the centre away from implementation to facilitation through the provision of policy direction and capacity building. The policy also empowers local government to plan and deliver services in consultation with citizens and other sectors.

As such, the policy is said to have empowered communities to participate in their own development, including the marginalized and poorer groups since in the eyes of its proponents it ensures that planning and decision-making processes are inclusive and avoid domination by the elite (District Councils Act of 1980). However, the feasibility of this decentralization is dependent on numerous factors especially if one considers Piper and Deacon's (2009) articulation that the locally established structures as a result of decentralization are too dependent to participate. Although this was in the context of South Africa's ward committee system, the same can hold in any context where decentralization has not been accompanied by devolution of power by the central government as Makumbe (1998) acknowledges. By extension, these local government structures were too dependent on the central government in terms of operational ideas since they belonged to the same political inclination, depended on central government resources both financial and material (Ndlovu, 2008:34).

Under the decentralization policy the government has initiated a Capacity Building Program as a strategy to enable the rural district councils to take charge of the responsibilities being decentralized to them. This capacity building program focuses on institutional framework strengthening, human resources development as well as financial management. However, the successful implementation of the decentralization policy hinges on the rural district councils that are mandated to take charge of the process through effective coordination to ensure the full participation of all stakeholders in the development process (Zinyama, 1992).

It is worth noting here that despite its good intentions, there exists a wide gap between theory and practice (Ndlovu, 2008; Makumbe, 1998). The policy has remained a neatly written White Paper whose fruits are yet to be harvested. The policy simply entrenches

the hegemony of the government over the development process and thus relegating communities to only the recipients of development, rather than the initiators of development in their respective localities. The fact that local councils have been mandated through the policy to plan, consult and deliver services does not guarantee prevalence of participatory initiative. If that is the case, then, one would be forced to suggest that the policy is a 'white elephant' that is contributing nothing meaningful to genuine community participation for development projects. Above all, Mutwira (1999) and Makumbe (2004) concurs that, the policy was mooted from above and lacks grassroots input. As such it is top-down in nature, hence the need to reformulate and refocus the policy so that it can be community-oriented in outlook.

#### **4.1.4 The State and Community Participation**

Literature on rural development has not dealt adequately with the issue of the role of the state in community participation. Given the dominance of the state in the lives and affairs of its citizens, community participation advocates are left with no choice but to include the activities of the state in social development (Makumbe, 1998; Maser, 1997). This is because state intervention in social development has been characterized with a lot of tensions that erupt from the confrontation of the state with other independent development agencies. In Zimbabwe this has culminated in policies that govern the operation of Non Governmental Organizations (NGOs) in the form of a Non Governmental Organizations Bill which was yet to be an Act (Ndlovu, 2008). Makumbe, (1998) notes that, this typical politicization of development has not only created operational conflicts between the state and other NGOs, but it has also generated tensions with those communities which do not subscribe to the political ideology of the state, particularly in this politically volatile environment. This is further reinforced by Ndlovu (2008:54) who argues that, "the state always attempts to advance its political mileage by purporting to be benevolent to its citizens, yet it is obligatory for it to be as such for it is one of its functions". Usually it does so through chanting ruling party slogans before sanctioning any development project at hand such that the community is made well aware of the sources of such generosity (Ndlovu, 2008). This has been observed as discouraging community participation especially where the community is of

different political affiliation. While community participation is a desirable goal, the extensive involvement of the state in social development complicates the issue and requires further analysis.

The state is one of the fundamental stakeholders whose presence is necessary in the community participation matrix for rural development, particularly at project level. The role of the state in this case is informed by an attitude or a commitment to achieve sustainable development in communities. The commitment is designed to be a long-term one, which means that development should be given a climate in which to grow and prosper. No wonder why Swanepoel (2000:86) is of the opinion that successful development needs a firm government commitment. Many states or governments in developing nations have claimed to exhibit maximum commitment in rural development policy to ensure an enabling environment for community participation in development efforts. Swanepoel (2000:87), has emphasized the role of the state in community participation through policy formulation, and argued that, without a national commitment reflected in a national policy there would be no basis or binding factor for development, and that development would therefore, at best be haphazard and ad hoc. It is important to note here that national policy commitment and administrative support are intertwined to such an extent that a lack in one of them would render the whole process of community participation impossible in real terms.

Ideally the state is the supporter of development (Swanepoel, 2000). This implies a lesser role for the state, both in effort and in importance. Swanepoel notes, if the state is the supporter of development, someone else has to be the initiator and the manager of that development. Swanepoel is thus advocating for the localization of development with the locals playing a greater role. The state would be just a partner whose role is to provide a favorable environment through an enabling policy, the provision of expertise, infrastructure and development funding for the locals to initiate, implement, manage, monitor and evaluate developmental projects in their different localities. The local people therefore, should take responsibility for development: they should make the decisions and they should do the planning. States in developing societies agree with the notion that popular participation is necessary if sustainable development is to be

achieved. Referring to the Rwandan community the then president of Rwanda, Habyarimana, is quoted by Hyden *et. al.* (1992:40) as having said that,

*“We must have confidence in the population; they must be consulted on everything that has to do with their development. ...The communes that have carried out these instructions are clearly developing more quickly than the others”.*

Such admittance by the person of the president is indicative of the importance of community participation in rural development for project sustainability. States often use local governments and government departments to harmonize the community with development. This is witnessed in most, if not all, developing states. Zimbabwe is one such state that uses government departments to spearhead development in communities, particularly through extension workers, who are government employees responsible for linking the local people with the government.

However, analysts familiar with state politics and administration wonder how the encouragement of participation will be implemented in the government departments as currently structured (Makumbe, 1998). This has been illustrated by various critics (Makumbe, 1998; Ndlovu, 2008; Musara, 2006) who point out that the structures within which government appointed extension workers do their work are not conducive to making them representatives of popular masses because they are also limited in capacity to engage or confront the very government they work for. Ndlovu, (2008) further notes that extension workers have been criticized for telling the communal people what to do and what not to do. Therefore, from the point of view of the masses, an extension worker represents the power of the central government and the most evident role of the extension worker is to collect taxes, fines, levies and so on. The Rwandan government in 1988 acknowledged the above argument when Habyarimana criticized the proliferation of taxes. He is quoted as having said that, “these contributions are necessary but they should not bankrupt the population” (Habyarimana 1988:35-40). Summing up the whole situation one donor study, as put forward by Hyden *et. al.* (1992: 46) observes that “training and visit is a hierarchical, top-down system of working with farmers and the local population in which the extension agents look up, not down, that is, they are accountable to their superiors and not to their clients”.

#### **4.1.5 NGOs and Community Participation**

There is widespread recognition in rural development that NGOs play a significant part in helping the rural poor to break out of their condition of poverty through sustainable projects in communities (Maser, 1997; Kaufman and Alfonso, 1997). Certainly, a major source of inspiration for these NGOs lies in their idealism and values which include their spirit of voluntarism and independence. Since the inception of the concept of community participation in rural development NGOs have been claiming to either have employed or employing the participatory development model in rural development. In fact NGOs have become important agents promoting beneficiary participation in development. Referring to the Zimbabwean scenario, Makumbe (1998: 65) notes that, both indigenous and foreign NGOs play a significant role in organizing grassroots people to participate in such activities as cattle feeding schemes, woodlot development, well digging and market gardening. In rural development initiatives the world over, and in particular the developing societies, most NGOs consider the empowerment of the poor as their major goal and objective. Chambers (1998) have substantiated this view by proclaiming that, empowerment has become so common in development jargon to levels that almost anyone in the development arena views it as a pre-requisite for the achievement of sustainable development. It is imperative to note that the empowerment process can be as basic as enabling groups to improve their conditions through socio-economic projects. However many NGOs view empowerment as a much more encompassing process that enables people, particularly the poor, to confront and deal with the factors that are causing their suffering.

In practical terms NGOs deem active participation by the poor in their development process as an essential pre-condition to their empowerment. However, according to International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) (2004), this participation is not only supposed to be in the implementation stage of projects but also in their conceptualization, design, monitoring and evaluation. Most NGOs have argued that, they have developed a highly effective participatory process to increase the involvement of the poor in their own development processes, to analyze and to act upon their situations through their own eyes and not as defined by the outside agencies. NGOs in

this case simply supply the expertise and the starting capital and equipment. Beneficiaries are supposed to provide the bulk of the labor requirements for the projects. Oakley (1992) holds the view that NGOs should play a passive role in project implementation as facilitators and not as implementers. The role of implementing has to be left to the beneficiaries who in this case know best what they need and ultimately how to go about the whole process. This argument implies that NGOs need not direct and tell the people what to do but rather listen to what the people want and then help them achieve their goals and aspirations.

NGOs are welcome in development activities at the local level because they enable people to have confidence in themselves since they allow people to make decisions about development. The material benefits accruing to the community are believed to be more visible when NGOs are involved in local development than when central government is involved. Makumbe (1996:77) has quoted grassroots-based government officials in Zimbabwe as having said that, government-initiated and funded projects usually take longer to implement than the NGO-initiated and funded ones. Most of these officials, according to Makumbe, felt that this was inevitable since it takes time to get central government to release funds for approved projects, a situation that is alien to NGOs.

However, in as much as NGOs have a very significant role to play in the development arena, especially in community development their work has not been spared from criticisms by various rural development commentators such as (Chambers, 1998, Makumbe, 1998, Zinyama, 2000). It has been argued that even though the various NGOs spearheading development in communities claim successful implementation of the participatory development model in project implementation with communities, a close look at the actual events on the ground reveals otherwise.

NGOs have been accused of taking the word “participation” or phrase “participatory development” at face value. The terms are underscored by such simplicity that easily tempts one away from a deeper search of what they really stand for. This simplicity makes participation an easy philosophy to subscribe to. The problem is that the terms describe a process that is difficult if not impossible to measure (Makumbe, 1998 and

Thompson, 1995). Therefore, due to the relative ease with which most of the NGOs approach participation the concept has suffered all, from abuse to casual transformations and renderings of its true meaning. Some NGOs have even been accused of manufacturing community consent for them to get funding from International donors that value the participation of beneficiaries in project implementation as a pre-requisite for funding (Ndlovu, 2008:45). These and other controversies surrounding the issue of community participation indeed justify the need for a more particular research which draws information from a particular Zimbabwean context with the view of proffering recommendations to avert the perpetuation of the problem.

#### **4.1.6 Community Participation in Zimbabwe**

In Zimbabwe there seems to be a lot of literature on community participation (Zinyama, 1992; Makumbe, 1996, 1998; Chiome and Gambahaya, 2000; Ndlovu, 2008). However, most of the information is scattered in different works whose thrust is not precisely community participation documentation. Of more significance to be noted here is that much of the literature is project documentation by NGOs that are working with particular communities. This particular research therefore is going to assess community participation in this particular case study in order to find out new insights about the discourse of community participation in Mushagashe community using this Zimbabwean background as a point of departure.

Makumbe (1996) examines the concept of participation in development as applied to Zimbabwe since independence. He notes that participatory development can be presented as a continuum of participation levels from passive participation, where donor or government-initiated ideas are promoted, to active participation where the recipients involved in all stages of a development project. However, the researcher opines that, in as much as Makumbe has tried to explain the concept of participatory development in Zimbabwe he has not done justice to the subject matter. He is pre-occupied with the role NGOs play in project life and little attention is given to the role of the beneficiaries in project implementation.

Zinyama (1992) also tried to explain the concept of community participation. Zinyama

(1992:23) argues that “...the process of rural development entails increasing the participation of the people concerned in the decision-making process, and this can be enhanced through local groups”. However, in spite of his sterling work in explaining the concept of participation in Zimbabwe, Zinyama’s contribution is not without criticism. He is guilty of giving much emphasis to local farmer groups at the expense of other important stakeholders in community participation, such as the locals in their individual capacity and NGOs as facilitators as well as the role of the state (Makumbe, 1998). This criticism is qualified by Makumbe (1998: 54) who argues that, attempts to understand the concept of community participation would be incomplete if the tripartite role of the state, the community and the NGOs is overlooked. This argument is valid if Maser’s (1997) advocacy for the need to recognize the participatory principle of equal partnership, which stresses that all stakeholders are equal and should recognize each other as such, is to be acknowledged.

The United Nations Development Program (UNDP) has also shared its views on participatory development in Zimbabwe. According to the UNDP (1998), participation has become the hallmark of sustainable development with a general shift from prescriptive “top-down” to participatory “bottom-up” approaches to development. The UNDP envisages participatory development as constituting a “non-directive” approach that enables people to regain control over their own development. However, Muther (1999) argues that, the document by the UNDP lacks a lot of essential issues that are necessary for community participation to take shape. He further submits that, the authors of the document concentrated more on the importance of the concept in sustainable development. They never enlighten the readers on the various stages that are necessary for the implementation of participatory development at community level.

#### **4.1.7 Chapter Conclusion**

It is apparent from the literature that, community participation as a concept is ridden with complexities and controversies. It appears as if most instances where participation has been claimed to be prevalent in development projects, have not been the case given the scathing criticisms coming from various scholars such as Ndlovu, 2008, Zinyama, 1992, Mutwira, 1996, Chambers, 1992; Swanepoel, 1992; Makumbe, 1998; Williams,

2006). It has been highlighted that, there is an explicit legal framework for community participation both at macro and micro levels, but it has emerged that it has failed to translate into practical and tangible participation of the local people because of the absence of effective enforcement and operationalization by different facilitators which include the government and NGOs. The state on one hand has been identified as complicating community participation through politicizing development and use of various strategies embedded in policy and legislation to govern its operational relationship with other stakeholders (Makumbe, 1998). On the other hand, the NGOs have been observed to be domineering in their facilitation of development projects since they always view local people as less knowledgeable to be directly involved (Kottack, 1998). This research therefore intends to find out whether this is true with particular reference to this case study area and project.

## **Chapter five**

### **5.0.0 Presentation of findings**

This chapter is divided into two main sections of which the first one is a presentation and description of the project background, objectives and activities. The second section will be a presentation of the qualitative and quantitative data based on various responses to the questionnaires, focus group discussions and semi structured interviews. Secondary data also helped in unleashing information about the project. The presentation and analysis shall be objectives based; and the themes were developed from the research questions.

The aim of the research was to assess community participation in rural development projects through a case-study. The research used the following research questions as a research guide to achieve the aim.

1. What was the project about and what did it achieve?
2. Did the project have any mechanisms to promote community participation?
3. How have the community contributed at any stage of the project?
4. How has the local leadership influenced community's participation?
5. What was the role of government in promoting community participation?
6. What were the challenges encountered by stakeholders in promoting community participation?

#### **5.0.1 Project Background**

Secondary data sources revealed that, the history of Care's Small Dams Rehabilitation Project (SDRP) in Mushagashe can be traced back to the 2002 drought when one small scale commercial farmer in the Mushagashe area, Mr. A. Borsch, approached Care for assistance in implementing a water conservation project in Mushagashe East small scale commercial farming area (Care Zimbabwe, 2010). Preceding the drought, Mr. Borsch had constructed a number of weirs and dams on his farm. As a result of these

impoundments, wetlands on his farm were improved and his farm did not suffer the negative effects of the drought to the same extent as the neighboring farms. Mr. Borsch then decided to initiate a program to assist other farmers in his area to protect their wetlands and to improve water conservation on their farms.

Care Zimbabwe visited Mr. Borsch's farm and decided to develop a program on wetland management through rehabilitation of small dams, not only in Mushagashe East small scale commercial farming area, but also in the adjoining Zimuto communal area to the east (Care Zimbabwe, 2010). A project proposal was prepared for catchment rehabilitation in the two areas. Care Zimbabwe offered technical assistance in formulating the proposal and in February 2009 officially approved the project. Care is said to have made a commitment of US\$ 646 742 for the implementation of the project, to start on 1 April 2009 which was later changed to July 1, 2009 (Care Zimbabwe, 2010).

The Mushagashe area is located within the Sabi Catchment of Zimbabwe. The catchment has long been a national concern. The then Ministry of Environment and Tourism (MET), other government agencies and NGOs have for a long time been searching for effective programs for the rehabilitation of the catchment. A notable effort in this regard was the convening of a series of post Rio Summit discussions on environmental issues for Zimbabwe in which the problems of the Save Catchment featured. This process is currently on-going and plans are at an advanced stage for the establishment of a Regional Council to develop a rehabilitation and development strategy and to coordinate and promote rehabilitation programs not only at community level but at national level as well. This sequence of events reveals that the preparation of the proposal by Care was simultaneous with the Sabi rehabilitation planning activities that were being coordinated by the Ministry of Environment and Tourism and the Department of Natural Resources, however, with less success due to lack of resources, since nothing significant was visible so far (Lovell, 2010). It should be noted that the implication of this project in the Mushagashe communal area was assumed to be a microcosm of the macrocosm, that is, a representation of the bigger rural development

efforts by the Ministry of Environment and the Department of Natural Resources Management and other various development agencies.

### **5.0.2. Project Objectives and Planned Activities**

According to the project documents, Care Zimbabwe Annual Report of 2010, the (SDRP) has the following objectives:

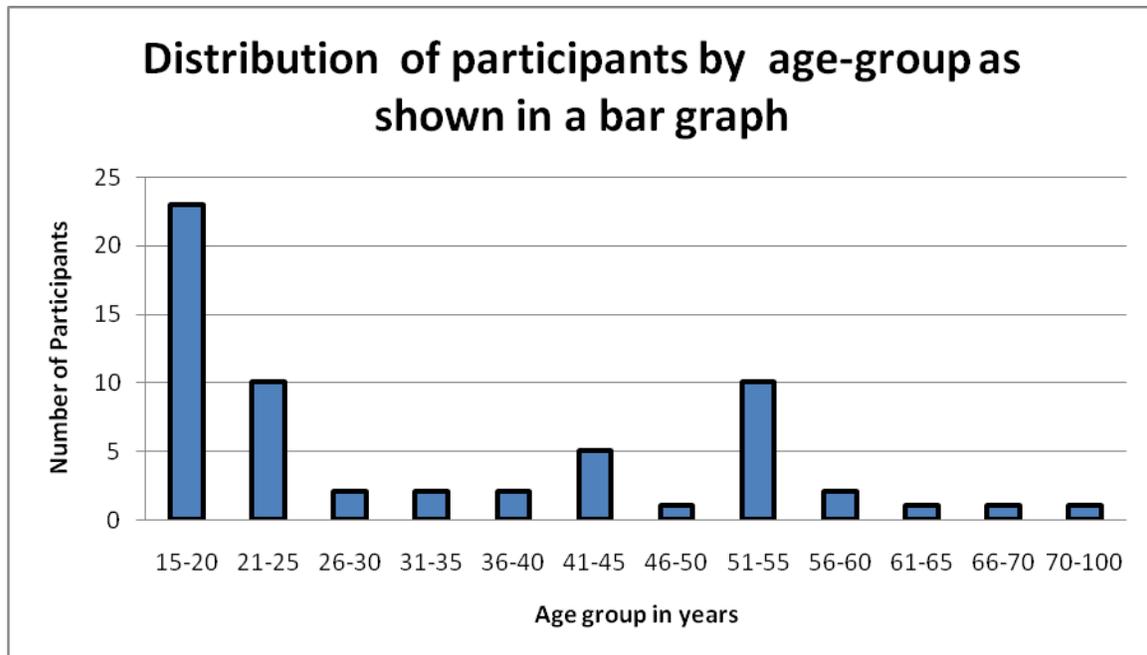
1. To develop an effective and appropriate methodology to initiate and implement (by communities), small dams rehabilitation in Mushagashe.
2. To improve the current agricultural practices and or introduce new practices that can maximize on the use of locally available resources.
3. To initiate and encourage maximum self determination and to minimize the current long term external dependency of farmers and villagers.
4. Mobilization for community participation
5. Development of activities and implementation of village resource management plan
6. Undertaking an inventory of resources, storing the data and monitoring change
7. Mapping, inventory and rehabilitation of small dams and water harvesting
8. Provision of training and supporting research
9. Institutional capacity building and strengthening of coordination between various stakeholders
10. Adoption and internalization of project methodology and approach by participating agents at field and higher levels
11. Empowerment of population groups as to decision making and management of water reservoirs.

One of the main activities of this project was community mobilization and maximum community participation since it was said to be a community based project (Care Zimbabwe, 2010). This mobilization was done in different activities, and it is the aim of this research to juxtapose these activities against findings from the respondents to establish whether there was effective participation of the local people. This will help in validating the credence of the proposition that local participation is always encapsulated

in this particular development project in Mushagashe. To make this easier, the researcher used the phases in the project life cycle as major themes of the findings.

### 5.1.0 Demographic composition of the participants

**Figure 1. Bar Graph showing the distribution of participants by age group**



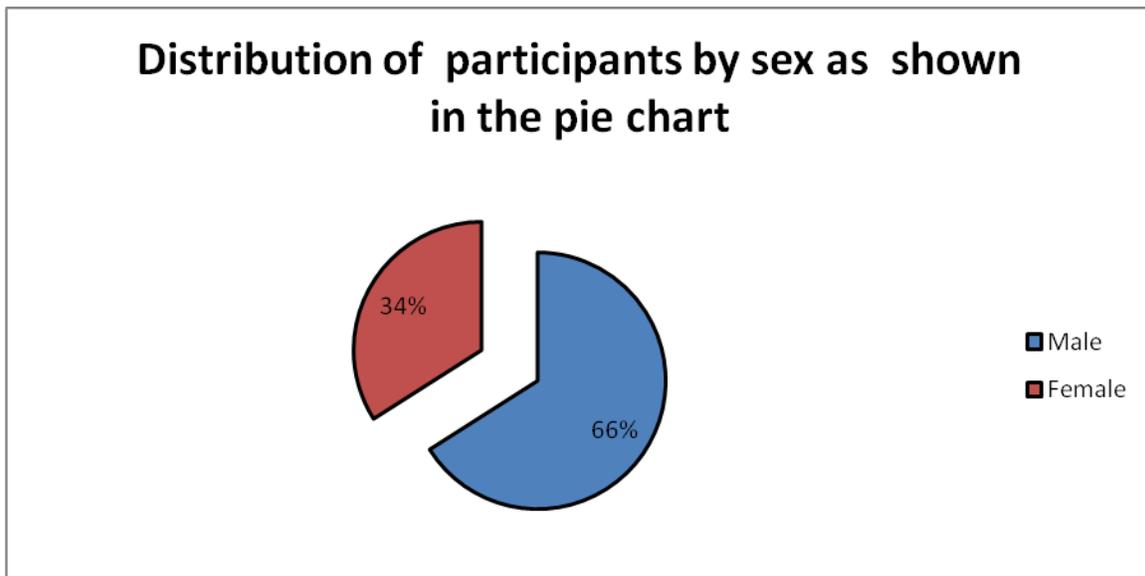
Source: Field Survey Data

As part of the demographic information the research sought to establish the age groups of the participants. Figure 1 above is a bar graph showing the respondents' age groups. The researcher distributed 60 questionnaires to 60 households in the Mushagashe community on the 15<sup>th</sup> of May 2011. The primary target respondent in the household was the household head. In the absence of the household head, the wife or elder child was interviewed. It emerged from the field survey that there were some child-headed households and in this case the elder child would be the respondent. This did not present problems because participation in this particular project was on the basis of household as unit. It was found out from the responses to the household questionnaires, the 15-20 age group constituted the highest mode in terms of participants since they were twenty three (23) about 38 percent of the total respondents. This was followed by those in the 21-25

and 51-55 who equally constituted (5) five respondents each which translate to 17 percent of the total respondents. The 41-45 age group was the third one constituting 8 percent of the total respondents because they were only five (5). The age groups 26-30; 31-35; 36-40 and 56-60 were the second last in terms of participation since all of them were (2) in each age group category thus 3 percent of all respondents for each age group. The least were those in the 46-50; 61-65; 66-70 and 70-100 age groups.

### 5.1.1 Distribution of participants by sex

A Pie Chart showing the distribution of participants by sex



Source: Field Survey Data.

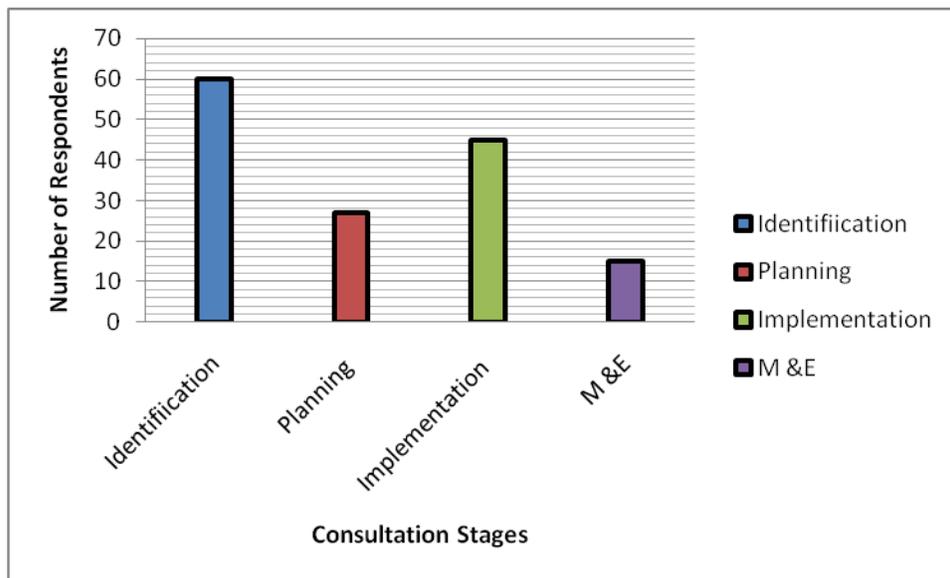
The research also found out a gross variation of respondents by sex. Male participation was 66 percent and female participation constituted 34 percent respectively. This proportion equally reflects the fact that in Mushagashe community, there is a significant number of female headed households since the target group were household heads. It is apparent that this typical variation could be attributed to the nature of the social organization of the community as a patriarchal society in which male dominance is well celebrated and women are expected to be subordinate to male authority. This could have been translated even to the realms of participation in the public sphere. Most of the

reasons for this variation are encapsulated in the responses to the question of challenges in the semi structured interviews as shall be alluded to below.

### 5.1.2 Community participation at various stages of the project

The research also sought to find out the extent to which the community participated at every stage of the project cycle. Below is an outline of the project phases and the corresponding activities by the project participants.

**Figure 4. A Bar Graph showing the contribution of the community at various stages of the project**



Source: Field Survey Data

The bar graph above shows the participation of the community in various stages of the project life cycle. It is indicative that, all the 60 (100 %) respondents acknowledged involvement in identification stage. At the planning stage, 27 (45%) confirmed that they participated whilst 45 (70%) partook in the implementation stage. The monitoring and evaluation stage registered fewer participants with 15 out of 60 respondents which translated to 25%. The reasons for this information of the variations in participation at different stages was very important in that, it helped in understanding the perceptions of both the development agent and the community towards community participation.

### 5.1.3 Distribution of participants by marital status

**Table 1. The table below shows the distribution of participants by marital status.**

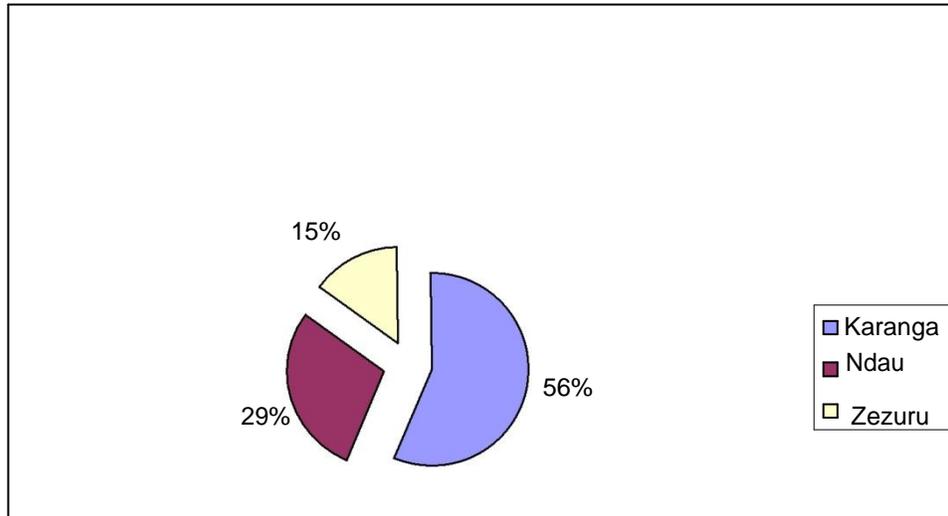
Status	Number of respondents	Percentage
Married	30	50
Single	12	20
Divorced	6	10
Widowed	12	20
<b>Total</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Field survey data

In terms of marital status 50 percent of the household interview respondents were married while 20 percent were single, 12 percent were widowed and only 6 percent were divorced. Coincidentally, the single ones happened to be fall in the age group of 15-21 in which case they constituted the child headed households. This was because the household heads were targeted in the first place, where there were no elders; the elder child would represent the household. The research tilted mainly to the direction of married people simply because married couples tend to have a settled and permanent life in their places of marriage and are thus significant participants in development projects in communities they reside. Furthermore, married women have been always active in development activities at household level whilst their husbands work in town.

### 5.1.4 Distribution of participants by tribal origin

**Figure 3: Distribution of participants by Tribal origin**



Source: Field Survey Data

More than half of the respondents (56 percent) were the Karanga tribe, followed by the Ndau (29 percent) while 15 percent was Zezuru. This tribal variation is shown graphically above. Community participation has been argued to mean differently to different people in different settings (Kottack, 1998). As such the tribal variation in Mushagashe was very instrumental in defining the concept of participatory development for project sustainability. A people's tribal background is pivotal as it defines their values and systems which in turn explain how they interact in project implementation (Makumbe, 1996).

### 5.2.0 Project mechanisms to promote community participation

The term 'participation opportunity' refers to chances created for community members to be involved in decision-making and raise their concerns regarding their neighborhood (Maser, 1997). In this section, participation opportunities will firstly be discussed in terms of residents' participation in community meetings, and thereafter, community participation in special meetings.

### 5.2.1 Community meetings and mobilization

According to the project activities, community meetings in Mushagashe were used as a platform to mobilize the community to be pro-active since the inception of the project. One field officer in focus group discussions said that,

*“...the facilitating agent with the help of the community created a Community Task Team (CTT) which was drawn from Village Development Committee (VIDCO) for easier mobilization during community meetings”.* (Care Field Officer)

Another officer also confirmed that

*“...since the pre-identification stage through other stages of the project cycle, we have held more than fifty (50) community meetings of which in most cases this constituted the consultation process”.*

This, however, was not supported by any form of evidence from either the community respondents or supporting documentation. According to the Community Task Team, community meetings were created for community members to raise issues and concerns and share ideas. The Mushagashe Task Team was critical in organizing community meetings and they used a loudspeaker and door-to-door approach for announcements. One member of the Community Task Team was heard in the focus group discussions exclaiming that,

*“...izvi zvaibatsirawo kuti vanhu vaina kuti vanhu ava varikuda kuisa vanhu venharaunda mberi”* (this deliberation by Care was a clear demonstration of its commitment towards putting the community in forefront from the onset).

Another team member in the interviews also said that,

*“...they just created the (CTT) in order to make the people believe that they are represented yet in the meetings we were just told what to do”.*

Another woman who identified herself as ‘Mama K’ lamented the lack of equal representation of women in the (CTT). She openly said that,

*“...dambudziko chete nderekuti varume vanga vakawandisa kudarika vakadzi muteam yacho, zvaifanirawo kuva equal” (the problem was that women were outnumbered by men in the CTT, they were supposed to be equal).*

Community meetings took the form of either general meetings or special meetings. In spite of the inherent shortcomings, this clearly demonstrates Care’s commitment towards fostering community participation from the onset.

### **5.2.2 Community capacity building through education and training**

As one of its main activities, Care undertook a community capacity building programme through provision of education and training. One official in interviews stated that,

*“This activity was meant to ensure a smooth establishment of an effective participatory methodology since this was one of the project’s objective”.*

This was achieved through training and educating the community about the importance of water harvesting and small dams’ rehabilitation. One community member said that,

*“...zvakanakawo nekuti vakatifundisa nezve kunaka kwekuchengeta mvura uye kumutsiridzwa kwemadhamhu madiki uye kuti zvinobatsira isu vacho” (it is good that they taught us about how and why it is important to manage water sources through rehabilitation of small dams, and how it will help us in the long run).*

A significant proportion of the community members also concurred with this view since they all acknowledged that when they are informed of the importance and benefits of the project, they are in a better position to effectively participate. One respondent stated that,

*“...kana zvakadai tinoshandawo tichiziva kuti tirikuzviitira isu pachedu” (if we are such that informed, we will participate with all our hearts knowing that we are ultimately doing it for ourselves).*

As such there was general consensus among participants that the capacity building programme was of paramount importance in enhancing their participation since they would be participating from an informed position.

### **5.2.3 Empowerment of local leadership structures**

There were mixed responses from the participants with regard to the agent’s recognition of the local leadership structures. Mushagashe community has a village Chairman who is the head of the Village Development Committee which is known as the (VIDCO) and politically he or she is under the Councilor of ward one under which the village falls. The Chairman said that,

*“...isu village yedu iri muward one and hapana chinokwaniswa kuitwa muno pasina kuti taziviswa ne ward committee uye rural district council yekuno” (there is no development activity which can be sanctioned in this community without due consultations by the ward development community together with the rural district council).*

In one focus group discussion, RDC development officers concurred that in some instances the development agent would just sidestep the RDC because the project was already ongoing and no longer in need of any formal presence of the Rural District Council development officers. This is perhaps because resources such as cement, concrete and steel were in the hands of Care. One Mr. Zimuto had this to say,

*“...taingoona mafield officers akutouya ari ega pasinave council, plus waizoona nerimwe divi ve council vaitio ve care varikuvasiya munemamwe mastages especially pamonitoring and evaluation” (we would sometimes see care field officers coming alone without development officers from the RDC and some development officers complained that they were only consulted during planning stage but no more further than that).*

Generally the responses are indicative of the fact that there seemed to be tensions between Care and the local leadership structures. This is very important if one is to understand the feasibility and efficacy of institutionalizing community participation in this seeming politically volatile community. However, there is overwhelming evidence that Care strived towards recognizing the local leadership structures, though with some resistance as shown above.

On the other hand, one Care field officer differed in his opinion when he stated that,

*“...we consulted every stakeholder at every stage of the project. If we didn't do that we would be confronted by RDC which usually uses its political power to do anything it deems necessary”.*

Upon further probing on what he meant by political power when it was about administrative issues of development, he further alluded that,

*“The RDC guys together with the village chairman and the village development committee are all Zanu PF supporters because in most instances they would come for meetings wearing party regalia. They also wanted us to chant Zanu PF slogans when addressing the community which we denied that's why they are hiding behind a finger saying that they were not consulted at some stages”.*

One respondent in the interviews also mentioned that,

*“...even the committee and the chairman, were not democratically elected by the village. They were just imposed by the District Administrator on the basis that they are supporters of Zanu PF. So it created problems when dealing with people from other political parties such as Movement for Democratic Change (MDC)”.*

### 5.3.0 Participation of the community at various stages in the project

Whereas it was the objective of the project to ensure a broad based community participation methodology, this seemed not to be the case. 67% of the respondents to household questionnaires indicated that the consultation process was indirect because in most instances they would just be told what to do without having been involved in the preliminary planning stages. 33% responded otherwise, saying that the consultation process was always direct because they were part of the proceedings from the outset. This variance demonstrates the need for a revision of the consultation process if its negative consequences on effective participation are not to proceed.

Similarly in response to the question of the nature of participation, 33% of the respondents indicated that the participation was voluntary; 60% indicated that it was involuntary in that it was coerced and 7% indicated that it was incentivized. As to why they indicated these sentiments, respondents who indicated voluntary participation further wrote that,

*“...because we were consulted and we were part of everything from the identification of the appropriate site, planning of activities, implementation, and monitoring and evaluation”*

Those who indicated involuntary gave various reasons but generally they raised the issue of fear of being politically victimized. One respondent wrote on the questionnaire that,

*“...participation was not free because in these villages, we are not free, you can't express yourself freely, people were force-marched to participate and in most cases we were just told after everything has been done. There is no way you would dare challenge this”.*

The respondents who indicated on incentivized participation seem to have had the same reasons with those who saw the participation as involuntary. Generally, the incentive was security from political victimization from Zanu PF hooligans. This was the suggestion of the reason written by one respondent as,

*“...hapana chitsva apa, chero veCare vacho vaingoitawo zvinowirirana na Councilor uye village chairman ne committee yose nokuti nyaya yacho vanoiziva” (obviously, even the Officers from Care were also forced not to confront with the local leaders because they knew the consequences).*

These mixed responses obviously confirm that participation of the community in the project cycle was viewed differently by the community members themselves. This variation is not only indicative of variability in community perceptions towards community participation, but, clearly demonstrates the impossibility of effective participation in such a scenario. Obviously, if people are victimized, they are stripped of their freedom to actively participate freely since they are either afraid or reluctant. Any form of participation in this case would not degenerate into positive participation but rather negative.

#### **5.4.0 Challenges encountered in fostering participation in the project.**

During focus group discussions and as alluded in the interviews, a lot of challenges were cited by respondents some of whom visibly showing signs of emotional dejection since they were yelling and shouting at one point in time. The most notable challenges and how they negatively affected effective involvement of the community in various stages of this project are highlighted in the narrations below.

##### **5.4.1 Domineering development agent**

Almost all respondents agreed that the nature of engagement by Care exhibited negligence of any form of contribution by community members. One old woman who seemed agitated exclaimed that,

*“...hapana apa, ve Care ivava vaingouya nezvinhu zvavo zvakatorongwa kudhara dzimwe nguva totoona marori otochera makomaba uye kuuya kusiya zvidhinha ne cement. Isu taingozoudzwa kuti nemuvhuro toda kuwana maunganidza matombo ekuvakisa. Uyezve mabhiridha acho vaibva navo asi kana umwe womuno, inio murume wangu atori bhiridha chaiye asi kana kumbosharwa” (there is nothing here, Care officers would bring programs*

*which were already designed and planned in their offices without due input of the grassroots. They would suddenly come to leave either bricks or cement and vanish without a word. They would also just prescribe to us to go to the mountains and collect granite stones which they stipulated time frames for us. More so, they brought their own builders without our own builders in this village yet we have many including my husband).*

This lamentation was further augmented by another young lady who openly stated that the consultation was only during identification of the sites which obviously was a prerequisite for the development agent to undertake since this was the preliminary stage which perhaps was meant to purport broad based consultation. She further said that,

*“...we as youths were only remembered when it came to fetching of stones, firewood and other forms of laborious work. We only witnessed one consultation in the village about which side to extent the dam wall which was obvious though. Other stages such as implementation and monitoring and evaluation were left out for Care”*

#### **5.4.2 Bureaucracy and Political Influence**

Most responses that demonstrate the negative influence of this factor were the same as those highlighted by respondents when they talked about the role of the local leadership structures and how this operationally influenced the institutionalization of effective community participation. In reiteration of what was said earlier on in semi-structured interviews, one community elder summed up this issue by openly saying that,

*“...the problem was that everything was done behind closed doors because it would take time to get information about the next activity and the reason was that they were waiting approval from the RDC which is the government. In the RDC again you would hear that the District Administrator is not available or the Councilor so no one can sign the papers. Besides, everything was done under the banner of ZANU PF as if these were elections. So some people were either afraid of not participating or participating”.*

This also constituted intra-group conflicts since people of the same village, community were forced to have ideological tensions emanating from their different political and tribal origin This was again confirmed by one man who openly confessed in the interviews that,

*“...government structures are too complex in their operations because you would see that progress would be derailed just because of the absence of the district administrator”.*

This indeed illustrates how bureaucratic the government is and how this in turn affects the effective operation of the RDC in facilitating local participation. This is because, the administrators would deliberately excuse themselves just to sabotage the process since they were also disgruntled by being excluded as indicated above.

#### **5.4.3 Favoritism**

The research established that selective participation by both the implementing agent and the community leaders is one factor which militated against full cooperation of community members. This was confirmed by respondents from both interviews and focus group discussions, who either directly or indirectly attributed their limited participation to unfair selection of participants especially representatives particularly due to the ethnic variation that characterized the community. This was captured in some of their sentiments such as,

*“...vaiketana pachavo vachipanane zvigaro vachitisiya isu nemazezuru, saka isuwo takarambe kuita mushandira pamwe navo tikati ashande ega”, (the Karanga tribe selected themselves into leadership positions in this project, leaving us so we chose to fold our hands and not participate).*

*“... even the RDC was also part of this tribal war because most of them are from Masvingo province and they side with the Karanga tribe” (community elder)*

Some respondents from focus group discussion ascribed lack of participation to the selection of leaders on the basis of education by the implementing agent since most of them were found to be teachers. This selectivity was found to be elementary in demoting participation of all community members due to its effect in demobilizing. Moreover, some women decried lack of visible women representation in Care's field team and the local leadership structures as a major setback to the participation of women. She said that,

*"...all the stakeholder seem to have forgotten the need to encourage women by including them in these very structures. The number of women in these systems is relatively and pathetically insignificant to demonstrate their importance in development. Obviously it discourages".*

Another woman during an interview said that,

*"...next time we want our own project in which we say what we want and then we make the plans and activities on our own without these men because they are always choosing themselves positions where they can control".*

These accounts both demonstrate that there was no recognition of the principle of equal partnership among stakeholders since others were relegated in various stages of the project especially women.

#### **5.4.4 Chapter Conclusion**

Having presented the responses, it is imperative from the presentation to note that the concept of participation is a contested terrain. There are mixed perceptions and reactions towards participation to the extent that, the feasibility of effectively operationalizing it remains difficult if the multifarious factors that militate against it remain unchecked. It is therefore important to stress on the need for various partners in development to strive towards avoiding repeating the same mistakes as highlighted in these findings in order to make the institutionalization of community participation possible.

## **Chapter six**

### **6.0.0 Discussion and Analysis of research findings**

This chapter is qualitative in nature. The research had five main objectives. The first objective was to elicit the perceptions of the community and the development agent on community participation. Secondly, the study sought to find out the efficacy of various mechanisms meant to promote community participation in the project. Thirdly, the research intended to find out the nature and level of participation at various stages of the project and fourthly, to draw out the challenges that militate against effective community participation in this project. This was all meant to provide the basis for recommendations. The analysis was not only limited to the answers to the objectives, but, was also based on other emerging themes that the research developed through research questions, and using the People-Centered Development paradigm as conceptual framework and available literature to discuss and validate the findings.

### **6.1.0 Organizational and Community Perceptions on Community Participation**

#### **6.1.1 Community Perceptions**

Participation has been conceptualized as an active process in which the participants take initiatives and take action that is stimulated by their own thinking and deliberation and over which they can exert effective control (Rahman 1993: 54). However, this is one but among several definitions by different scholars. . From a community's point of view it was established that effective community participation is when the locals who in this case are the *raison d'être* of projects in communities are actively participating, that is, from the birth of the idea to the design stage, to the implementation stage, to the monitoring and evaluation stages as well as benefit sharing where necessary, through for instance making decisions, as confirmed by a significant proportion of the respondents in the focus group discussions. 92 percent of the respondents, both men and women, the young and the old were in concurrence with the view that their genuine participation in developmental projects in their respective localities should be a *prima facie*

respective localities should be a *prima facie* consideration if community participation is to be institutionalized and effectively operationalized in development projects.

This concurs with a lot of scholars in literature, for instance, Cernea's (1994:54) acknowledgment that, "...putting people first in development projects is not just about organizing people but it means empowering them to be social actors rather than passive subjects and take control over the activities that affect their lives". This admission seems tenable if one considers the fact that these are the same theoretical sentiments behind the People-Centered Approach to development's emphasis on the need to depart from the repetition of the dictatorial and exclusivist orientation that characterized past development paradigms such as the modernization theory, and embrace and value the contribution of the indigenes or the local people in the first place as attested by Brohman (1996). This participatory orientation seem to precipitate from the realization of the negative ramifications of excluding the local people in any development endeavor in which they are either beneficiaries or victims, a deliberation which accounts for why for example other respondents were quick to say that,

*"Organizations are not sincere and that they preach participation on paper yet in practical terms it is inexistent".*

Another young woman said that,

*"..if the development project is for us why then exclude us from the proceedings?"*

These sentiments are in tandem with Kottack's (1996:24) acknowledgement of the need to put the local people at the heart of any development effort when he emphasizes that this should be informed by the idea of "...nothing for them without them". Consequently, the research established that the community perceives their participation in development projects as a an important element if they are to establish feelings of ownership towards any development efforts which directly or indirectly affect them both in the short and long run.

*"Beneficiary participation in project life cycle is of paramount importance for the realization of sustainable projects"* so said Tumburai, an elder in the village.

Indeed any development initiative that excludes or belittles the locals in terms of participation is an antithesis to efforts towards institutionalizing community participation as a fundamental element in ensuring sustainability in projects. This view is also substantiated by Berrenman, (1994: 6) who affirms that, “the concept of indigenous development per se envisages a perspective in which people living in a specific social, cultural, economic and ecological setting define their own concept of development, definition of relevance and that correspond to indigenous circumstances”. The writer opines that this observation concurs with the participatory approaches’ pre-occupation with the need to root any development efforts in the hands of the intended beneficiaries if the positive attributes of invoking participation in the first place are not to remain a mirage. This view is complementary to Brown’s (2000) postulation that, community participation is the active process by which beneficiaries influence the direction and the execution of the whole project cycle rather than merely being consulted or receiving the share of benefits. This automatically implies that, participation should be from project identification, design, implementation and monitoring and evaluation rather than assuming its existence merely because of the prevalence of such words as ‘consultation’ and ‘community involvement’ in the documents of the implementing agents.

### **6.1.2 Organizational Perceptions**

A review of the terms of reference and programme activities against the findings from the field proved that development agents only profess community participation on paper through the terminology which is not only deceiving in its disregard of the absence of such participation by the local people on the actual ground, but, demonstrates how they are still erroneously engulfed in perceptions of the local people as incapable of effectively and positively partaking in development projects since they are perceived to be lacking the necessary technical know-how associated with project management, which they considered a prerogative of the trained project managers. One employee from Care was not hesitant to confess that,

*“...the truth is that, these people should be mere spectators in our executions because in most cases they need to be taught a lot of staff before we begin any*

*project which in turn is wastage of time since we can just make the project functional for them without them”.*

The researcher notes that the organization’s terminology in the terms of reference which for example use such words like ‘involvement’, ‘consultation’ and so forth in their methodology of engagement towards community participation, is deceiving inasmuch as it depicts high levels of the organization’s interaction with the community in the project cycle. This can be further supported by the visible variations in terms of the participants’ responses to their involvement in various stages of the project cycle. For example, identification was 100%, but other stages such as planning, implementation and monitoring and evaluation were 45%, 70% and 25% respectively. This variability is a valid indication of the absence of broad based consultation at all stages of the project.

It is also reminiscent of Arnstein’s ladder of participation in which the initial stage of the project cycle is equated to ‘manipulation’ which is categorized as ‘non-participation’ (Arnstein, 1969). This implies that the implementing agent would manipulate the process to appear as if the local people are participating yet in actual fact it is non-participation. This perception seems to be the reason behind the emergence of the People-Centered Development Paradigm, which Chambers (1998) alternatively refers to as “Putting the Last First”, a loaded phrase which connotes the inclusion of the marginalized at the heart of development efforts regardless of what they know or do not know. This observation tallies with Makumbe’s (1998) assertion that, development agent’s proclamation and understanding of community participation has been more rhetorical than it has been practical inasmuch as there have been overwhelming evidence of limited cooperation from local due to their relegation from participation in its proper sense. The irony is visible in the controversial and subjective responses given by some of Care’s field officers. For example another officer from the NGO commented that,

*“...community participation is the involvement of community members in project formulation, monitoring and evaluation”.*

As a consequent of these variances in perceptions and view points, current accounts of participation suffer from a lack of understanding and what it intends to attain. Such a

situation further mystifies and romanticizes the concept of participation, making practical application even more problematic. Nevertheless, in spite of such gross variances in perceptions on community participation, the concept has remained vague and obscure in its continuous lack of practical implications. Muther (1999) states that, due to the relative ease with which most NGOs approach participation, the concept has suffered all, from abuse to casual transformations and rendering of its true meaning. As a result, participation has been misunderstood to suggest mere coming together of stakeholders, which is distorted as meaning consultation. The general belief from respondents therefore was that community participation includes, but is not limited to meetings, consultations and events. Respondents from focus group discussions remarked that community participation involve actions from both development agents and target communities that seek to achieve willful, deliberate, premeditated and intentional partaking or involvement in a project. It was thus established that the coining of development models by development agents was in a way influencing on how the communities should organize themselves in project implementation. Therefore it would seem to mean that NGOs are imposing their will on communities when it comes to project implementation.

### **6.2.0 Mechanisms to promote participation**

There are four strategies of encouraging participation in rural development projects as outlined by Oakley and Marsden (1998:23) and Muther (1999). Firstly they claim that collaboration of beneficiaries is sought by informing them of the rural development plans. This, they argue would be the starting point for everyone who is willing to participate in that they depart from the same spring board and they can move at the same wave length. On the contrary this was not the case as respondents in semi structured interviews confirmed that "...the development agent only planned alone and later on informed the VIDCO through the RDC of the plans". This implies that participation was 'top-down' since it came straight from the development agent to the VIDCO via the RDC and then finally to the community. This contradicts the People Centered development Approach's call for the need to include all stakeholders, especially the

beneficiaries in the identification, planning, implementation and monitoring and evaluation of development projects as Maser (1998) confirms.

This is further strengthened by Oakley (1998) who recognizes community organization as a *prima facie* basis for effectively promoting participation. The World Conference on Agrarian Reform and Rural Development (WCARRD) declares that active community participation can only be achieved adequately organizing the people at local level. As such the reason for passive participation in this particular project could highly be attributed to lack of effective organization of the people at the local level since the local institution of leadership was ridden with problems of administrative capability and legitimacy. This is because as shown earlier, respondents were quick to accuse the VIDCO of using political power to force people to participate. For instance one community member had to exclaim that, "...the vidco is all Zanu PF, what you would expect is to follow what they want because if you don't they will deal with you individually". This typical organization is contrary to the one envisaged by the WCARRD and therefore would not equally effect positive participation.

One of the main activities of this project was community mobilization and maximum community participation since it was said to be a community based project. This was done in different activities such as empowerment of local leadership structures, and community capacity building through education and training as identified before. This seems to have been based on the project's major objective which was stated as "To develop an effective and appropriate methodology to initiate and implement (by community), mechanical and biological rehabilitation of small dam in Mushagashe. This demonstrates the implementing agent's commitment to ensuring the massive involvement of the community in efforts towards achieving the stated objective. It shows that the community was expected to be at the fore of 'initiating' and 'implementing' whatever was necessary for the fruition of the project. This seemed as if the community was to partake in the whole project cycle.

Nevertheless, this seeming commitment emerged to be theoretical than it would be practical if cross-examined against the findings. The research confirmed and affirmed Chambers (1992) and Cordillo's (2001) observation that, much of literature on

community participation is project documentation by international and local NGOs on particular projects they support, which does not reflect the real activities on the ground. My argument is that, they just purport the prevalence of such participation on paper as a matter of record to appease their donors such that they secure long term funding. This assumption is based on the absence of a genuine reason by the NGO for not ensuring that what they write as their programme objectives and activities inform what happens on the ground. This was also solidified by respondents from semi-structured interviews who happened to be representatives of Care; one field officer Julius confessed that,

*“...we just draft these programmes without due input of the local people because it serves no purpose to consult them on project proposals on which they are logistically unknowledgeable of”.*

Another one stated that,

*“...yes we do value community participation, but for things to move on it's not always the case that these local people should take part, it is not feasible”.*

The researcher opines that, these sentiments are just but a mere reflection of the extent to which it is a vivid and valid to allege that NGOs are hypocritical in their undertakings in that, on paper they claim to establish mechanisms that support positive and effective community engagement yet on the ground the playbook changes. This does not only replicate the modernization theory's prescriptive orientation and its rigidity in its disregard of the knowledge of the indigenes, but, also concretizes the possibility that these NGOs concentrate more on their role in ensuring successful community participation and ultimately overstate the case.

### **6.3.0 Community Participation in Project Phases**

Beneficiary participation in project life cycle is of paramount importance for the realization of sustainable projects so said Tumburai, a councilor in the village. Indeed any development initiative that excludes or belittles the locals in terms of participation is an antithesis to efforts towards institutionalizing community participation as a

fundamental element in ensuring sustainability in projects. This establishment is also substantiated by Berrenman, (1994: 6) who affirms that,

*“...the concept of indigenous development per se envisages a perspective in which people living in a specific social, cultural, economic and ecological settings define their own concept of development, definition of relevance and that correspond to indigenous circumstances”.*

This view is complementary to Brown's (2000) postulation that, community participation is the active process by which beneficiaries influence the direction and the execution of the project cycle rather than merely being consulted or receiving the share of benefits. This automatically implies that, participation should be from project identification, design, implementation and monitoring and evaluation rather than assuming its existence merely because of the prevalence of such words as 'consultation' and 'community involvement' in the documents of the implementing agents.

The responses to this matter are supportive of the above idea. Of the household questionnaire respondents, 100% concurred that they were consulted in the identification but the subsequent stages the participants were significantly low insofar as there were no other reasons for the reduction in participants. In the planning stage only 45% of the respondents were part of the activity whilst only 75% of the respondents partook in implementation. Only 25% were involved in monitoring and evaluation. This variation is indicative of effects of the interplay of such factors as political influence, intra group conflicts in the form of tribalism and elite manipulation. perhaps suggesting that participation was top-down since in most technical stages such as monitoring and evaluation and planning, the community was not fully cooperating yet the stages proceeded without them implying that, there could be other technocrats who were partaking without bothering much of the absence of the community. As such, indeed effective participation remains an elusive admiration especially if the community is not active in every crucial stage of the project which in turn enhances a strong sense of ownership of the project as Eade (2000) observes.

#### **6.4.0 The influence of Local Leadership on Community Participation**

The research established that NGOs only recognize the local leadership structure as a matter of principle or for the purpose of satisfying the protocols and not as a fundamental obligation. Some of the VIDCO members, Mr Mabike and Mr Bhinya concurred in their view that,

*“...these local NGOs just come to them for signatures from these leaders such that they use them to authenticate their claims that they have consulted the communities in question and just for filing and records purposes”.*

Technically this implies that the implementing agent wields more power even to control and subvert the local leadership. This is confirmed by some of the members, who complained that,

*“...we are just used when it comes to mobilizing the communities only yet we were not part of the planning. So usually we would pretend as knowing but we will be ignorant of what comes next”.*

This observation qualifies Cooke and Kothari's (2001) view that participation has been misconstrued by many, with the effect of creating false illusions of local community involvement and empowerment while at the same time reinforcing norms and existing power relations between the local people and implementing agents. The writer notes that this oversight clearly refutes the general participatory development notion that community participation automatically empowers the community to make decisions on issues that affect them (Chambers, 1992). From the above analysis, it appears so that decision making control by communities is only held as a formality and never in reality. As such, the project activities and methodology exhibited gross disregard of power structures at the micro-level and paradoxically, to concentrate on the local would also exacerbate prevailing inequalities especially if Kottack's (1996) postulation that, the production and representation of knowledge is totally different from the exercise of power, is considered.

It is apparent therefore that, any development efforts which disregard the local leadership structures are likely to have problems in effectively mobilizing the local people to fully cooperate. This is primarily because; these local structures are symptomatic of the local peoples' popular will especially if the structures are a product of democratic deliberations. It follows logically as well that, any undemocratic leadership structure is bound to be less progressive in terms of mobilizing the community to be cooperative in due to the community's resentment emanating from general disregard of illegitimate authority. This is consolidated by Makumbe (1998:87) who argues that, "such legitimation crisis fosters hostility from the community which finds no basis for recognizing clandestinely 'elected' people". This simply implies that, in any development endeavor, it is essential to ensure that the inherent power dynamics does militate against the primary objective of the development project, which is empowerment, through creating unnecessary tensions that will ultimately culminate in apathy. Hence, the People-Centered Development approach envisages a situation in which local institutions are supposed to be put at the fore of development if the indigenes are to feel ownership of the project (Mason and McNulty, 2000).

## **6.5.0 Challenges**

### **6.5.1 Domineering Development Agent**

This is when the development facilitator or agent is dictatorial and does not celebrate the variability of ideas from the other stakeholders, particularly the grassroots. Chiome and Gambahaya (2000) argue that, the disregard of contributions by the local people has resulted in the failure of many community development initiatives. Their argument is premised on the need to recognize the positive ramifications of indigenous knowledge from the local people, an understanding of their needs from their perspective. The research has established that the development agent was very dominant in all phases of the project cycle, not even giving the local people any opportunity to fully participate in other phases of the project. For example, identification stage seems to be the most popular stage in the project cycle in which almost everyone participated. Varying proportions of the respondents were active in planning, implementation and monitoring and evaluation stages. Suggestively, this reinforces the view that development projects are initiated by outsiders instead of the insiders (Kottack, 1996). The insiders are only

used to ratify what has already been designed so that it would appear as community consent. This however is done in a very cleverly fashion where the facilitating agent use some of the locals especially the learned ones who may have been out of touch with the realities in the community since they view themselves as distinct from the rest and look down upon the poor in the community (Kaufman and Alfonso, 1997). They further note that the views of these elite groups in the community are then processed as direct views of the community. Such a situation is very detrimental in that it culminates in notions of full cooperation by the whole community yet it is just an individual. One participant at a focus group discussion remarked that,

*“Organizations arrived already knowing everything. They come here and look around but they see only what is not here. They appoint their own teams to carry out what they call ‘baseline surveys’ and information from these surveys becomes community consent”.*

The above argument is depictive of a unilateral situation whereby community consent is manufactured and becomes bait for sourcing funds from funding organizations. It was also established that, often, the so-called professional experts dominate decision making and manipulate instead of facilitating development processes. This can be substantiated by one household respondent to the interview, who insisted that,

*“...the Care officials told us at one point that, if we have any problems with the project we should just excuse ourselves since he can make it work alone”*

It is common knowledge that the trademark of ‘development experts’ is often that they always know best and therefore, their prime function is to transfer knowledge to the communities whom they view as ‘knowing less’ (Kaufman and Alfonso, 1997). This vividly demonstrates that the nature of participation in this context is top-down rather than bottom up. Given such a situation it would be naïve to accept the view that the current discourse on community participation is genuine in its attempt to empower communities to choose development options freely, but should rather be accepted as an attempt to sell preconceived proposals for the betterment of organizational aspirations.

### 6.5.2 Unequal partnership

Dennis (1997) alludes that, this is the recognition of the importance of every person's skill, ability and initiative and that everyone has an equal right to participate in any processes irrespective of their status. The researcher notes that, this depicts a departure from imposition of development projects by those supposed to facilitate, to a two way process where the grassroots' contributions should not be overlooked at face value since they should as well inform the subsequent processes. This therefore, perhaps, is a justification for the need to even factor in indigenous knowledge in community development processes, a deliberation which discards the modernization theory's lament for the revocation and replacement of traditional cultures with modern culture and models of knowledge. Development processes should be sensitive to variability in knowledge as Coetzee (2001) exclaims that, lack of such sensitivity accounted for the problems and failures of many projects. This observation is premised on the positive attributes of involving the local people's knowledge in tackling community problems. For instance Chiome and Gambahaya (2000:65) acknowledge that, "the manifestation of an empowered community entails the visible use of their indigenous knowledge in resolving their own problems". This can be substantiated by a significant portion of the respondents, who in the focus group discussions remarked that,

*"...the reason why this project was moving slowly is because of the implementing agent's reluctance to fully and effectively consider all stakeholders as equal partners in this particular project"*

. Some were heard in focus group discussions exclaiming that,

*"...if they could consider us as partners we would even go on to the extent of providing our resources such as cow-drawn carts and labor, and it would be cheaper..."*

These remarks complement Farm Africa's (1996) observation that, effective participation yields such advantages as reduced costs and efficiency, higher productivity and ultimately sustainability and self reliance. Unfortunately, these advantages seem to

have been missed due to this unwarranted disregard of the local people. The researcher observes that, this demonstrates the indispensable fact that, if communities are accorded a chance to provide their skills in community development endeavors, they would eventually become empowered to efficiently progress with future development initiatives even in the absence of donors, which is a product of dedication to participation. It logically stands therefore to argue that, the principle of equal partnership is the root for effective community mobilization and participation since it gives the community exposure to be responsible and this aid in eliminating the barrier of lack of transparency or trust.

### **6.5.3 Favoritism**

This is qualified by O'Donnell (1992: 12) who argues that, "discriminatory selection of participants is a recipe for the demise of efforts to mobilize communities to effectively participate in development projects". This could be a product of different aspirations among the community members. This was noticeable in the composition of women and man who participated in this project. Males constituted 66% whilst there was 34% for females. This account for why some women in focus group discussions decried over selection of male representatives especially in the community task team. On the same note, the tribal variations are also indicative of the favoritism in selection since the Karanga were the dominant tribal group both among the participants and in the VIDCO. Even the findings on participation on ethnic basis, the Karanga constituted 56%, Ndau 29% and Zezuru 15%. One man confirmed in the interviews on the question of challenges that,

*"...in most cases it was always the Karanga and no opportunity for other Ndau and Zezuru people. There was favor in the appointments since this was mainly done by Care alone..."*

It is the researcher's opinion that, effective community participation in this context suffers from the consequent apathy due to negative attitudes developed by the relegated groups. This is complemented by Mason (2003:19) who notes that,

*“...the disgruntlement does not only manifest in droopiness or reluctance to participate, it sometimes degenerates into physical protestations that are not only detrimental to the community project, but even to the development agents”.*

On the same note, some women also decried their relegation from influential positions,

*“...by some overzealous men who are still mentally imprisoned and unenlightened since they still adhere to the archaic patriarchal ideology of male superiority and female subordination”.*

This was uttered by one lady teacher from the community but was shared by many women who participated in the focus group discussions. This deliberation did not only disclose that the selection criteria was gendered, but, culminated in the stifling of the efforts to incorporate women into participation. This is qualified by Oakley's (1992) observation that, women in developing communities have suffered a double tragedy in that culturally they have been relegated to inferiority in terms of status, and in development they are also marginalized on the wrong basis of assumed lack of knowledge. Apart from the noticeable fact that there was no consideration of the principle of inclusion which Maser (1998) considers to be fundamental, the researcher therefore notes that, these consequences could have provoked the departure from Women in Development Approach and Women and Development Approach to Gender and Development Approach, because the first two approaches were characteristically based on selectivity and connoted a positive discrimination against women in favor of men (Maser, 1998:23). The fact that the efforts to include the perceived disenfranchised group in this case was strangled by selectivity, hints on the need to observe the participatory principle of inclusion both in spirit and in practice, if full participation of the community is to be feasible.

#### **6.5.4 Bureaucracy and Political Influences**

It should be noted that bureaucracy and political influence has got an effect of rendering the local people passive recipients of development projects (Makumbe, 1998). In this context the agent was too bureaucratic as well as the RDC to such an extent that the

subsequent deliberations seized to be freely open to the local villagers. If Berrenman's (1994) submission that "where there is bureaucracy there is autocracy", is to go by, then it is compelling to argue that, this bureaucratic nature of the development agencies results in a top-down type of approach since the decision making power would be a prerogative of just a few individuals yet it affects the whole community. This is supported by Mathur (1997) who attests that, bureaucrats have contempt for the capabilities of the poor to determine needs and direct development. Perhaps, this is because according to Thompson (1995) the state on one hand is too middle-class and the NGOs on the other hand are upper-class and middle-class, that is, the functionaries working in these agencies are drawn mainly from the urban class. This makes their lifestyles, values and inspirations to clash with their assigned tasks and the rural poor class. Berrenman (1994) opines that, lacking adequate training for effective mobilization of these poor, they feel they know what is best for their clientele, a scenario which directly contradicts the People-Centered Development approach's advocacy against assuming the grassroots as inexperienced and passive recipients of externally designed programmes. In such a context, the agencies' approach is likely to be patronizing and authoritarian. This was confirmed by various sentiments from respondents who were quick to blame everything on the way in which politics was a major problem to their zeal to participate. One man was heard saying that,

*"...the problem was that everything was done behind closed doors because it would take time to get information about the next activity and the reason was that they were waiting approval from the RDC which is the government. In the RDC again you would hear that the District Administrator is not available or the Councilor so no one can sign the papers. Besides, everything was done under the banner of ZANU PF as if these were elections. So some people were either afraid of not participating or participating"*.

Surely, if such politicization continues unabated, it would be a dream to envisage effective participation especially if fear is the force behind the mobilization of the community as on women confirmed that,

*"...if you disagree you will be punished by the ZANU PF people since they will*

*accuse you sabotaging their efforts to build the nation and that you are an MDC supporter”*

This view is supported by De Wit et al (1989:45) who attest that, the social structures in targeted areas are such that information is channeled through local leaders who are often political patrons or professional middle-men, thus the rural poor remain silent and the local leaders make decisions about important issues also affecting the former without the former’s involvement. Ticconi and Tisdell (1992:275) see participatory approach as a collision path between the state, NGOs and the village social arrangements. These often have different and contradictory interests in that for instance, the state through its agents wants political mileage; the NGO wants more funding from its donors and the village wants community development. The need for power sharing is often resented by those wielding it. Consequently, participation would be supported half-heartedly (De Wit et al, 1989:53).

As a corollary, the poor tend to reject participation in the project if they believe their contributions will be insignificant as was the case in this project as evidenced in the variations in on the number of participants at various stages of the project cycle as indicated in figure 4 above. This perhaps accounts for why 69% indicated that the participation was involuntary generally because they were afraid of the political backlash if they do not participate since the whole project was politicized. Only 31% confirmed it was voluntary and they indicated that they were proactive from the outset of the project. This only goes a long way in supporting Cooke and Kothari’s (2001) argument that, participation is secondary and often incongruent with the political and organizational imperatives of conventionally managed projects.

#### **6.6.0 The influence of Project Objectives and Activities on Community Participation**

One of the main activities of this project was community mobilization and maximum community participation since it was said to be a community based project. This mobilization was done in different activities and seems to have been based on the

project's major objective which was stated as "To develop an effective and appropriate methodology to initiate and implement (by community), small dam rehabilitation in Mushagashe. This demonstrates the implementing agent's commitment to ensuring the massive involvement of the community in efforts towards achieving the stated objective. It shows that the community was expected to be at the fore of 'initiating' and 'implementing' whatever was necessary for the fruition of the project. This seemed as if the community was to partake in the whole project cycle. Nevertheless, this seeming commitment emerged to be theoretical than it would be practical if cross-examined against the findings. The research confirmed and affirmed Chambers (1992) and Cordillo's (2001) observation that, much of literature on community participation is project documentation by international and local NGOs on particular projects they support, which does not reflect the real activities on the ground. The researcher suggests that, they just purport the prevalence of such participation on paper as a matter of record to appease their donors such that they secure long term funding. This assumption is based on the absence of a genuine reason by the NGO for not ensuring that what they write as their programme objectives and activities inform practice. This was also solidified by respondents from semi-structured interviews who happened to be representatives of Care; one field officer Julius confessed that,

*"...we just draft these programmes without due input of the local people because it serves no purpose to consult them on project proposals on which they are logistically unknowledgeable of".*

Another one stated that,

*"...yes we do value community participation, but for things to move on it's not always the case that these local people should take part, it is not feasible".*

The researcher opines that, these sentiments are just but a mere reflection of the extent to which it is a vivid and valid to allege that NGOs are hypocritical in their undertakings in that, on paper they claim to establish mechanisms that support positive and effective community engagement yet on the ground the playbook changes.

## **Chapter Seven**

### **7.0.0 Insights, Conclusion and Recommendations**

This section is an overall summary of the whole research. Firstly, general insights about the concept of community participation and development shall be alluded to. Secondly, there shall be a comprehensive conclusion of the findings and the discussions. Lastly, recommendations shall be given based on the findings on how community participation can be best practiced without impediments.

#### **7.0.1 Insights**

Taken together, the voices of the community and other development agents provide a convincing argument for giving priority to community participation as an active two-way process that may be initiated and sustained both by communities, development agents and local authorities. Community participation can therefore make significant contribution in achieving numerous objectives of community development projects as detailed below;

#### **7.0.2 Increasing democracy**

Community participation in decision making, planning and action is a human right. An increasing number of people in the community are disillusioned with the role of the state and other development agencies, and they would want to see more participatory approaches in any development endeavour. It is apparent that, new approaches and structures of community development efforts should transcend people being viewed as passive recipients of pre-designed plans development plans by agencies and decided by elected representatives; and enable genuine participation and empowerment of the community.

#### **7.0.3 Combating Exclusion**

Community development and community organizing, often works with specific groups of the population, especially those that are marginalized and disadvantaged. The

demographic variability characterizing people in the community on the basis of political affiliation, age, tribe and gender, poses significant political, cultural and perceptual challenges to effective institutionalization of participation. Therefore, it is important for the stakeholders in any development effort to embrace relevant skills, knowledge and attitudes that enable the community and other parties to the development initiative to effectively cooperate and be united. By giving the stakeholders one voice, community participation can play an important role of combating social exclusion within the society.

Regardless of the mode or form of participation used in the project in Mushagashe, rural development is for the poor; therefore, participation should be for the poor and not the elite. The latter's involvement might only eventuate manipulation, co-option and distorted planning due to power relations and diverse interests between the grassroots and the facilitating agencies.

#### **7.0.4 Overcoming barriers to community participation**

As regards obstacles to participation, such as preferential treatment and monopoly by a few, tribal conflicts, unequal partnership, politicking and domineering development agent were seen to heavily militate against effective community participation. Most development agencies often neglect these factors yet they do more harm good to participation and this in turn results in the disempowerment of the community. Therefore, community participation has been seen to be both an outcome of empowerment and an effective empowerment strategy. The actual process of participation can inherently empower individuals and the community to understand their situations and to gain increased control over the factors affecting their lives. This can in turn enhance people's sense of well being and quality of life.

#### **7.1.0 Conclusion**

It is indisputably clear from the research that the deteriorating socio-economic conditions of communities can be improved if they themselves actively participate in the very development processes meant to be their remedy. However, it should be noted that,

to ensure effective cooperation and involvement of the community in the development process in a more practical sense, has proven to be a sheer paradox, which has been predominantly purported and sustained through the use of the word 'participation', which nevertheless has also shown to be a catchphrase of many development agents. This study has demonstrated and made plain that community participation can only be successful if organizations recognize the inherent structural limitations and opportunities for effective institutionalization of community participation especially the elimination of the barriers identified in the research such as intra group conflicts, domineering development agent, preferential treatment, bureaucracy and politicizing development.

The researcher maintains that, the fruition of effective community participation rests on the recognition of the functionality of the principles of participatory approach which are; inclusion; equal partnership; transparency; sharing power; sharing responsibility; empowerment and cooperation. The cogency of this observation can be validated by an appreciation of the positive correlation of these principles with the various setbacks to effective community participation as established by the research. The fact that the People-Centered Approach to development celebrates participation of the grassroots in all stages of the community development cycle deductively implies that, exclusion of the grassroots is tantamount to limited cooperation of the grassroots which implies limited participation. Hence the rationale for assessing community participation in rural development projects as was the preoccupation of this particular research is tenable, especially if the effective involvement, mobilization and participation of the community for real empowerment are to be feasible. The writer therefore recommends that, there should be operationalization of the principles of the participatory approach in order to eliminate the various ways in which effective community participation can be constrained. More importantly, the community should be given an opportunity to identify its own problem, design its own solutions, implement the solutions and monitor and evaluate every activity on an ongoing basis without undue interference of any sort. This would go a long way in ensuring a departure from the conceptualization of participation as tokenism or a mere formality.

In order to give significance to the above findings and conclusions, it is necessary to make recommendations that are pragmatic in development practice. Hence, the following are some proposals.

### **7.2.0 Recommendations**

This particular research on the concept of community participation in rural development projects in Mushagashe community has culminated in realization of numerous ambiguities, prospects and opportunities in how communities can be effectively mobilized to participate actively and efficiently in developmental projects. Based on the findings the researcher therefore made the following recommendations:

There seems to be an institutional gap in Mushagashe Community. The community is deficient of well established CBOs which provide an encouraging platform for the easy and effective operationalization of the concept of community participation. Since the community houses a multiplicity of other projects by other NGOs, the research has found it imperative to harness and synchronize these activities through properly established community structures. This therefore calls for a proper community-based initiative or network to effectively and efficiently deal with various development efforts in which the community is actively involved from the onset to the end.

It is extremely important that development workers and agents strive to build on what is there instead of destroying existing traditional structures and beliefs in order to create new one. In this case cultural systems such as their indigenous knowledge that are used by traditional communities to manage projects in Mushagashe should be encouraged and strengthened. Very often organizations have been downplaying the importance of these systems since the education they received from facilitating organizations advanced the interests of these organizations to a greater extent. Thus in order to avoid possible confrontation and internal conflicts within and with the locals, organizations need to recognize the informal structures that sanction social relations in the community. More so they need not to advance their agendas more vigorously at the expense of community wisdom through their indigenous knowledge on matters to do with their active participation in the management of developmental projects since this would turn out to

be domineering in outlook.

There is a need for a genuine strategic partnership arrangement between communities and strategic organizations. Such partnerships will result in the proper understanding of the various issues and policies affecting local communities that have a bearing on the sustainability of projects in these communities. It is important to note that what has been happening in the development arena when partnerships only exist at the organizational level is not substantive in sustainability terms. This is because by arranging partnerships between themselves organizations knowingly or unknowingly establish elite clubs where the top bras of the organizations would dine and wine in flash and posh hotels in the name of partnership. The genuine partnership expected here is grassroots in nature where organizations interact more with the community participants not amongst themselves. Yes, they may have argued that they have been encouraging that partnership herein referred above through training and education but in all fairness this is easier said than done.

The research also established that there is a lot of untapped information related to community participation in Mushagashe. As such, there is a need for more research on the issues that affect the community. Further research will enable researchers to probe the status quo on why the concept of community participation has not lived up to its expectation of ensuring visible and pragmatic involvement of the grassroots in development management. However, the researchers should exercise caution, that is, the bracketing of all presuppositions that would lead to the stigmatization of the indigenous communities particularly their indigenous knowledge.

Communities have been deprived of information on the role of their effort in development processes. In this case there is a strong need for awareness on the role of the communities and their indigenous knowledge systems in ensuring effective institutionalization of community participation. As such there is a need to establish community based information technological centers (ITC) for the display, storage and dissemination of community participation related knowledge to communities. Government and NGOs should strengthen community awareness on the value of the role of the locals in rural or community development through education and training.

More often than not organizations have been dictating to the people their own perception about effective participation by the locals in development projects. Against such a scenario it is, therefore, recommended that organizations should not tell the locals how to participate but rather listen to what the locals have to say about their participation in development projects. If only they can do that this would go a long way in establishing a proper framework within which participation can be a realistic methodology which informs any development efforts both at micro and macro levels. Lao Tsu a Chinese philosopher remarked that,

*Go to the people. Live with them, Learn from them, and Love them start with what they know, build with what they have. But with the best leaders, when the work is done, the task accomplished, the people will say, “We have done these ourselves”.*

The statement by Tsu if taken seriously and implemented by organizations participation can be translated into a realistic notion to inform practice.

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Be specific.....

9) Can you please tick on areas you were consulted in this project?

Identification	<input type="checkbox"/>	Planning	<input type="checkbox"/>
Implementation	<input type="checkbox"/>	Monitoring and Evaluation	<input type="checkbox"/>

10) How did you see the consultation process by the NGO

Direct	<input type="checkbox"/>
Indirect	<input type="checkbox"/>

11) How have you contributed in your participation in this project?

Physical participation	<input type="checkbox"/>
Mental participation	<input type="checkbox"/>
Emotional participation	<input type="checkbox"/>

12) Did the project's participatory methodology pay respect to the local leadership structures?

Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
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You may specify how...

13) Were the local RDC and the government supportive of the community's participation in this particular project?

Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
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14) Overall, how can you rate the community's participation in this particular project?

15) What would you suggest to improve the participation of the community development projects?

**Annex II. Questionnaire for CARE and Masvingo Rural District Council Officials.**

**Research Topic: Assessing Community Participation in Rural Development. A Case Study of CARE Zimbabwe's Small Dams Rehabilitation Project (SDRP) in Mushagashe.**

Date .....

Interviewer's Name .....

Community Name .....

1) Does your organization have any community participation framework?

Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
No	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

If yes, which are they?.....

2) Does your organization value grassroots participation in project management?

Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
No	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

If yes, what role did the community play in this particular project as facilitated by your organization?

3) Does your organization value the community's indigenous knowledge?

Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
No	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

If yes you may specify how.....

4) Is your understanding of community participation different from that of the community?

Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
No	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

If yes how?.....

5) What challenges have you encountered in your attempt to make community

participation practical?

6) What do you suggest as solutions to these challenges?.....

### **Annex 3. Interview Guide for Focus Group Discussions.**

**Research Topic: Assessing Community Participation in Rural Development. A Case Study of CARE Zimbabwe's Small Dams Rehabilitation Project (SDRP) in Mushagashe.**

- 1) What are your general views on the project as a whole?
- 2) Has the project been supportive of local people's participation and how?
- 3) How have you contributed at any stage of the project?
- 4) What challenges have you encountered in your participation in the project?
- 5) How has the local leadership influenced community's participation?
- 6) What challenges did you encounter in your mobilization to participate?
- 7) What can be done to enhance effective community, participation.

