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Participation of the Grassroots in Rural Development: "The Case of the Development Education Programme of the Catholic Diocese of Machakos, Kenya"*

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ABSTRACT

An effective participation for grassroots development would only be realised where the grassroots have the freedom to make their own decisions and set their own development priorities, draw their own plans; implement (with their own built-in monitoring and evaluation systems) and ensure a fair share of the fruits of their work (including any costs thereof) for each member of their community.

Some perspectives on grassroots participation for rural development
A story is told of a development worker who went to a remote village. He was highly motivated and fully prepared to solve all the villagers' problems and transform the 'Primitive' community. However, he came to realise that people lived under immense fear and apathy, not even prepared to do anything to change their situation. He soon learnt that this fear emanated from a 'strange' development in that village. The villagers reported that they had of late noticed a 'monster' across the valley which they believed was sent by the evil spirits to kill them.

They went to show the development worker where the 'monster' was. At one stage the villagers were so afraid they left him to face the 'beast' alone. After crossing the valley he discovered that it was nothing else but an overgrown water melon. Nevertheless, to satisfy the villagers, he acted 'brave' by drawing out his sword and dramatically cutting it into pieces as the villagers watched from a 'safe' distance.

However, to his great dismay, the villagers could not welcome him back despite what he had done for them. Why? They requested him to leave the

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village in peace, fearing that he was yet another monster. They wondered how he could overcome the 'monster' all alone if he was not another one. A few years later there was another overgrown water melon in the same village. Another development worker came to the village and learning of their fear, he asked them to join him with their traditional weapons and face the 'monster'. They all tiptoed abreast towards the 'unknown'. The development worker identified the object but did not disclose what it was. On reaching it they all set on the 'monster' with their traditional weapons until they shattered it. They proudly walked back to the village, singing and dancing, celebrating their great achievement. The development worker lived in the community for a long time, learning many things from the villagers. At the same time he taught them new things including how to grow and eat water melons. What does this story mean?

The present widespread concern for grassroots participation is not without a history. It is a diligent effort to correct an historical error in development approaches which tended to marginalise the rural traditional sector. This error had led to the creation of certain categories of rural populations regarded as less privileged and more vulnerable such as women, unemployed, sharecroppers, seasonal labourers, tenants, small farmers, small artisans, nomadic pastoralists, the destitute, etc.

The development approaches of the past have tended to relegate the 'grassroots' to a mere 'resource' for the development of the urban centres and the metropolis. The traditional rural sector was often seen as a resource potential that needed mobilisation (for example through the rhetoric of participation) in order to provide free or cheap labour for 'rural-modernisation' programmes, or for commercial plantations that fed the populations of the cities. The traditional sector was often seen as the source of cheap labour for the modern urban sector. On the other hand, one may wonder who largely appropriated the benefits of increased agricultural exports? The net effects of such economic growth stimulated by the mobilisation of rural resources will include better wages for the staff of farmer cooperatives, increased supply of imported capital and urban consumer goods, etc. Of course the traditional rural sector benefits as well from such economic growth but at minimal magnitudes compared to the urban sector. In the final analysis, the 'grassroots' will in most cases be found to play a passive role in such developmental processes, appropriating the least of the benefits.

How would the participation of the 'grassroots' change this 'order of events'? Would the mere increase of public and private investment in the rural sector bring about a significant impact leading to equitable 'grassroots' development? Would such an approach in itself promise better living standards for the 'grassroots'?

Research in recent years has suggested that more was needed to ensure

that public and private investment in rural areas contributed directly to the uplifting of the standard of living of the grassroot populations. The 'trickle down' effect of such investment will not just happen in the absence of relevant policies that ensure maximum participation of the grassroot populations, not only in the development process but, equally importantly, in the equitable sharing of the benefits of development.

Take for instance the effects of the Green Revolution (1960-1970). Statistics (Worsley, 1984; Esman, 1978) prove that agricultural production sky-rocketed in many Asian countries and Latin America in the 1960's and 70's, with comfortable per-capita food ratios and large surpluses. As a result of the introduction of intensive technology and mechanised approaches to agricultural production, fantastic yields were experienced that beat previous world records.

Ironically, however, at the same time the Green Revolution was performing production miracles, hunger and starvation had become a regular phenomenon among the majority of the population in those same countries.⁴ Rural poverty had not been alleviated but instead had deteriorated (Power and Holenstein, 1976; Worsley, 1984; Esman, 1978). The findings of many social scientists has therefore challenged the originally widespread notion that the mere increase in production records associated with the Green Revolution had made the latter the 'panacea' for the alleviation of rural poverty. Something more was needed to provide an effective alleviation of poverty among the 'grassroots' populations. What was this?

Alternative development approach sought

To quote Heredero (in Fernandes, 1980:57):

"People's participation will go a long way to distribute wealth more equitably, doing away with the present inequalities and providing a more equitable base for a better system of social relations."

Although this statement identifies the effects of a genuine participatory development programme, it leaves us with a more fundamental question as to how this process takes place.

Let us briefly review the approaches of the Green Revolution to identify the causes of the social and economic inequalities that were concomitant with this process. Esman (1978) observes that one mistake associated with the Green Revolution approach was the occasional denial of land to small farmers in favour of the large farmer. It was assumed that the large farmer had a greater capacity to produce surplus food for the urban population and cash crops to suffice both local industrial demand and export. This assumption led policy makers to shape policies that tended to favour the large farmer, such as making more land available to the large farmer at the expense of the small farmer (as a consequence, the small farmer was often

reduced to landlessness and subsequently hired as a wage labourer by the large farmer). The introduction of mechanised agriculture laid-off many agricultural workers too.

Chambers (1983:181-182) argues that large farmers dominated credit facilities and marketing co-operatives at the cost of the smaller producer. He points out that even agricultural extension staff were "locked in with the more progressive farmers". This implies that agricultural inputs and technology became concentrated around large farmers who appropriated the largest portion of government subsidies through such services. No wonder, therefore, the benefits of the Green Revolution have been unequally distributed.

Effective participation towards grassroots development

Participatory grassroots development is I believe an alternative approach for equitable rural development. However certain conditions would have to be observed to ensure such results. We will reflect briefly on these conditions, which will lead us to the analysis of the development education programme of Machakos Diocese as a case study.

Grassroots participation is seen as a process whereby the marginalised groups in a community take the initiative to shape their own future and better their lives by taking full responsibility for their needs and asserting themselves as subjects of their own history. This is a collective venture through which the 'grassroots' discover their identity in the wider society. The process is marked by the development of new knowledge and skills by the people, including their appropriation through adaptation and control of technology and extension services so that it serves them in response to their development priorities and in the context of their life experiences.

How could this effective participation come about? Eight preconditions for effective participation by the grassroots can be identified.

(a) *Effective leadership*

Evaluation of participatory projects in our experience in Kenya show that one of the key factors for their success is the presence of an effective local leadership. This relates to the scope of commitment to the cause of the group; trustworthiness and accountability; the degree of creativity, and developed general leadership skills. Such leadership would show high respect for people's ideas and experiences and the value of the human person. For this reason, the leadership will always seek to involve people in making decisions which affect their lives.

(b) *Rising level of social awareness*

Our experience has led us to conclude that for effective participation to be realised, the 'grassroots' need to be effectively motivated through an indepth awareness of the social forces militating against their socio-economic

welfare. They have to discover the causes of their miserable living conditions, without which their participation would not only be fruitless but also frustrated. The grassroots will have to discover their worth in the society, and their immense potential to change undesirable living conditions.

(c) *Self-organisation*

Effective participation will be best realised in the context of a grassroots-based-organisational framework, be it small community based groups (eg women's groups, school leavers' groups, etc) or interest-based community organisations (eg share croppers' unions, tenant unions, farmers' co-operatives, hawkers' unions, etc).

A fundamental factor in effective participation is that leadership in such organisations must be provided by the 'grassroots' themselves and not by the dominant groups (whether from within or outside the community). These are the same groups which often dominate decision-making power and leadership in ordinary community institutions and organisations, a fact that has relegated the 'grassroots' people not only to spectators but also losers in community development programmes. Grassroots leadership has therefore to be cultivated leading to self-organisation for effective participation. For the best results such 'grassroots' organisations should ensure social homogeneity in membership drives, to avoid the possibility of domination by the more powerful groups.

It is important to point out that the scope of the potential for self-organisation of 'grassroots' in any given society will largely depend on the nature of the political environment. To be sure, we cannot expect the effective participation of the grassroots in a situation where group formation and group meetings would be illegal, or where leadership is only a matter of appointment from above. Hence the scope for participation of the 'grassroots' will tend to be directly proportional to the degree of democratic freedom in the political environment.

(d) *Support framework*

Usually when 'grassroots' organise themselves for their own development, there develops what appears to be polarised interests between them and the powerful groups in the community. Reliable research findings (Esman, 1978) have observed that projects oriented to the rural poor will inevitably generate social conflict as rural elites resist any efforts that may work against their interests.

It has therefore been argued that organisations for the 'grassroots' will need support since, more often than not, the rich already have power over the lives of those who are poor and that often the social and economic system favours the interests of the rich while the poor are constantly less able to control their own future (Nyerere, 1973).

Esman (1978) takes this point further and suggests that such support for the 'grassroots' will only be provided either by a government or through a legally recognised non-government agency. Such support, however, should avoid the temptation of creating a 'godfather' or 'benefactor-beneficiary' relationship which would be another kind of domination, leading to apathy and defeated participation, rather than to partnership and collaboration in development.

(e) *Small-scale projects*

Effective participation will be best realised where the grassroots begin from the known and move to the unknown, from small projects which can be managed within the scope of their limited local resources and local expertise towards more ambitious projects. Success in small and easy projects gives the grassroots the necessary confidence to attempt larger and more complex projects. In small-scale projects grassroots groups learn to participate, organise, and manage, etc, an experience which is translated into a useful resource when it comes to more challenging participatory development initiatives, the same way small grassroot groups would be recommended (as opposed to large groups) for more effective participation in a community project.

(f) *Less dependence on bureaucratised professionalism*

Over dependence on bureaucratised professional services will more often than not frustrate participatory development initiatives. Usually such services would either be too scarce, or completely inaccessible, or too expensive for the grassroots to employ. Such over dependence on 'expertise' has also tended to perpetuate the 'top-down' approach in development, whose end result is the defeat of participation of the grassroots. Hence the more a group depends on these specialised services, the more its scope for free participation, and potential for creativity, is limited.

However, this is not intended to imply that 'expertise' and 'professional' assistance would be irrelevant in participatory programmes. What is being said is that in the process of such assistance there would have to be an explicit effort to transmit the basic skills to the local leaders so that, in future, they would have less need for such external technical assistance in project operation and maintenance. Grassroots leaders would have to be helped to integrate their local experiences and traditional technology with the modern scientific expertise in order to cultivate 'professional self-reliance' within the grassroots, towards more effective participation.

(g) *Minimised risks*

Effective participation will only take place where the possible risk consequent on such participatory changes have been given due consideration and the alternatives discussed. For example, an ordinary small-scale

farmer in a semi-arid zone will be hesitant to adapt to a new high-breed seed (even though a better harvest is promised) unless he is assured of an alternative survival strategy in case of crop-failure. He would prefer retaining his traditional drought-resistant seed than risking an innovation that might lead to famine and starvation. In this case, subsidies for the innovation costs or crop insurance schemes would be appropriate measures for the more effective participation of such small farmers whose fear of economic-risk in such participation is well founded.

Take another example of farm wage labourers whose employer pays below the legal minimum wage. An attempt to organise such labourers to demand their rights might be met with apathy and resentment, unless an alternative survival strategy is provided in case their employer terminates their jobs. Villagers may not wish to challenge an exploitative business man or unscrupulous money lender until they open their own cooperative consumer shop or start their own savings and credit schemes. The truth of the matter is that the margin of living of the grassroots is so much at subsistence level that they have learnt from experience that simple mistakes could mean a lot of suffering. They would therefore tend to be slow and overcautious in taking chances (Griffin, 1974).

(h) *Potential for social harmony*

Social harmony in a participatory group project will largely depend on the homogeneity in the group membership, whereby members will have minimal social differences. It is important to specify membership criteria in participatory projects in order to ensure that only the real 'grassroots' people become eligible. It is equally important to note that even the 'grassroots' themselves can be highly differentiated. Some have bigger and better pieces of land, others have better educated children, others are relatives or close friends of 'big' politicians, highly placed civil servants, etc. Some belong to bigger and more popular families or clans. Others are clients of local money lenders and business men. All these social differentiations will surface in the group relations, exerting a lot of influence on group interaction, thus influencing the overall direction and vision of the group.

Training in human relations and awareness programmes would have to be an integral part of the participatory process to help build the necessary group cohesion and co-operation, thus overcoming those underlying social differences.

In the following pages we are going to reflect on the Development Education Programme of the Diocese of Machakos, as a case study to help put in a practical perspective the participatory ideas discussed so far.

The Development Education Programme (DEP) of Machakos, Kenya

(a) *Background information*

The Catholic Diocese of Machakos covers the entire district of *Machakos*, an area of 14 000 sq km with a population of 1.6 million. It is the second highest populated district in Kenya. Machakos is a semi-arid district, with the population largely living on drought resistant crops like 'Katumani' maize, beans, peas, cassava, millet and sorghum. Cotton is extensively grown as a cash crop, while coffee is found on the high potential hilly regions of the district (less than 20% of the land in Machakos could be categorised either high or medium potential). Livestock keeping would be moderately extensive.

Nearly 98% of the inhabitants of this district belong to an ethnic bantu group, the *Akamba*. The rest are people from other districts who work there.

The major development needs and priorities in Machakos include water, agriculture, health and the creation of employment opportunities for school leavers. It is a district with meagre natural resources, without any mining potential and with limited arable land. However, some wildlife exists in a few game reserves.

(b) *The Catholic Diocese of Machakos*

The Department of Development and Social Services under the Catholic Diocese of Machakos was established in 1974 when a full-time lay Development Co-ordinator was appointed.

This marked the beginning of a new era in the development approach of the church. Until this time, the church had tended to limit development outreach to the missionary legacy of giving hand-outs to the needy, ie charity to the hungry, the naked and the shelterless.

Since the early 1960s the church as a whole had been going through a period of reflection provoked by the teachings of the Second Vatican Council. Associated with this change was the assumption of more responsibility by the laity, not only in contributing to church leadership but also in organising community development programmes to better the standard of living of the people.

(c) *A pilot adult literacy project takes shape*

Following the appointment in 1974 of the first full-time Development Co-ordinator, the initial task of this co-ordinator was to design a community survey scheme to identify the development needs and priorities of the grassroots in the diocese. This was done with the help of a national team from the Kenya Catholic Secretariat, and the diocesan development staff of the neighbouring diocese of Kitui.

This survey (popularly referred to as "Listening community survey of

Generative Themes'") was based on six areas of life within the grassroots communities: family, education, subsistence, recreation, beliefs and values and patterns of decision-making (socio-politics). This survey exercise was carried out by teams representing various walks of life, eg nurses, catechists, teachers, priests, women and youth, for a period of three months. They visited public places such as markets, water points, bus stations, funeral and wedding ceremonies, where they carefully listened to what people talked about with strong feelings. These issues were noted and recorded as 'Generative Themes' and later prioritised, and incorporated into a community development education curriculum.

Adult literacy was consequently identified as a priority need and a literacy programme was started on a pilot basis in three neighbouring communities at the end of 1975.

Literacy class discussions became the springboard to other development concerns in the village. The villagers discussed issues raised by the 'Generative Themes'. Such a discussion would take one hour before proceeding to alphabetical literacy to complete a literacy lesson of two hours. In this way, the grassroots gradually became not only alphabetically literate but also socially literate as they learned to solve their socio-economic problems within their community.

By the end of 1979, the literacy programme had spread all over the diocese. It was from these literacy discussions that a number of socio-economic projects were started, such as women's handicrafts, tree planting, cooperative farming, savings and credit schemes, bakeries, cooperative grain stores, consumer shops for farmers, water projects, etc.

In 1978 a women's programme was started under this development education programme, and with full-time personnel. This was followed by the recruitment of an agronomist to respond to the growing demand for somebody to give technical assistance to the then mushrooming agricultural activities. A water engineer was also recruited for technical assistance and co-ordination of the fast growing number of water projects. In this way the development education programme continued to expand and give birth to various additional programmes: primary health care, family life, small homes for disabled children, soil conservation and afforestation, school leavers' programme, savings and credit cooperatives, farmers' consumer shops and leadership training.

By the end of 1984, the development education programme of the Catholic diocese of Machakos had nearly 2 000 grassroots groups with about 60 000 participants. The diocesan development staff is composed of 11 full-time 'professional' staff (all but two are from the district) and eight (local) administration staff. We have 16 full-time field workers, nearly 100 part-time field workers and more than 1 500 voluntary group leaders.

The Development Education Programme (DEP) in relation to grassroots participation

As we shall see in this section, DEP is basically founded on the ideals of participatory development.

(a) *Methodological approaches of DEP*

The Diocesan DEP shares a common vision with the national DEP of the Catholic Diocese of Kenya which reads as follows:

"We aim at motivating and empowering (people) to take active responsibility to transform their own society by setting their own goals and making their own decisions, while at the same time being open in dialogue to wider society. This will be achieved by grassroots awareness encouraging the participation of all; leading to coordinated action; rooted in small Christian communities. In collaboration without compromise, the small Christian communities unite for self-reliance reaching out to all God's people, in the struggle for justice for all" (Crowley, 1985:94).

The key words in this vision statement include:

- motivation and awareness
- grassroots
- participation
- self-reliance
- justice for all.

Certain principles go with the above vision statement, giving the functional guidelines as follows:

(i) *No education is neutral:*

Education is understood to be like a messenger with a definite mission. It will either help to conform and confine people in their existing situation of life, or will lead to the awakening of people into new possibilities of better living. In other words, education will either seek to condone (whether directly or otherwise) the causes of suffering, poverty, inadequacy, injustices and inequalities, or will seek to avert suffering, alleviate poverty, discredit causes of inequalities, open wider potential for adequacy in life, and abhor injustices. Education, therefore, can never play a neutral role in such matters.

(ii) *Relevance of development issues:*

People will act on those issues about which they have strong feelings. All education and development projects should start by identifying the issues which local people speak about with excitement, hope, fear, anxiety, or anger. Participatory research becomes an integral component of people's development process.

(iii) Problem-posing:

All participants are recognised as creative people with a capacity for action. The animator facilitates the group process of identifying problems in their lives which they wish to act upon, find the root causes and work out practical ways in which they can set about changing the situation.

(iv) Dialogue:

The challenge to build a just, egalitarian society is very complex. No individual knows exactly how to do it. No one has all the answers and no one is totally ignorant. Each person has different perceptions based on their experience. To discover valid solutions each one needs to be both learner and teacher. Education must be a mutual learning process.

(v) Reflection and action:

Most real learning and change takes place when a community experiences dissatisfaction with some aspect of their present life. An animator can provide a situation in which they can stop, reflect critically upon what they are doing, identify any new information or skills that they need, get this information and training (input) and then plan action.

(b) Characteristic approaches of DEP:

The DEP leadership formation programme is seen to be crucially important since it has been realised that true community development will only take shape where there is good, dedicated, informed and skilled leadership. Leadership training workshops are organised in phases or as seminars.

Participants are sent in groups who meet at least 25% of the total training costs. Awareness and information sharing forms part of these leadership training programmes. It also includes human relations training and trust building skills, etc.

DEP services to the grassroots communities will only be given to groups and not to individuals. This has helped to manage the scarce services more effectively and to ensure that services reach the most needy cases in the community. It has been observed from experience that it is the less-privileged members of a community who easily work together as a group.

The DEP groups are run by group committees chosen by the participants themselves. This helps in the delegation of responsibilities, which is an important factor in participatory programmes. Leadership is therefore decided upon by communities themselves, free from the danger of imposition from above.

The DEP groups use codes (posters, plays, songs, proverbs, etc), to depict situations of concern to their community, followed by thorough discussions. Such discussions lead to the identification of root causes, and plans are drawn for action to change the undesired situation and bring about

Table 1 Strategies for grassroots development through participation

Elements	Standard top-down Approach	Participatory bottom-up Approach
1. Setting development priorities	Central Planning Bureau and technicians	The grassroots "know where the shoe pinches most"
2. Scope	Area-wide regional setting	The grassroots identified as eligible participants
3. Agents of development	Extension offices	Indigenous facilitators, group leaders, and the grassroots themselves. Extensionists seen as catalysts called upon only when necessary
4. Functional unit	Formal organizations with written by-laws and officers and registered officially	Informal homogeneous groups and associations
5. Types of activity	Various purposes, often limited to economic development and provision of social amenities, usually politically motivated	Development education for awareness, followed or accompanied by income raising projects. Transcends economic concerns to issues of social justice in society but without political ambitions
6. Service delivery mechanism	Piecemeal, by bureaus or depts with bureaucratic bottlenecks and overlapping	Integrated according to specific needs of group of the grassroots. The latter seeks for what they need as opposed to waiting to receive handouts
7. Administrative structure	Verticle lines of supervision from central to local offices	Coordinating committees at all levels
8. Monitoring & evaluation	Progress reports from local to regional to national offices	Multi-level workshops among development agency personnel group organisers, and the "grassroots" (participatory evaluation)
9. Data collection	"Objective" research methods	Participatory action research
10. Beneficiaries	"All people"	"The grassroots"
11. Success	External leaders creditable	It matters less once the job is done.

Source: "Participation of the Poor in Rural Transformation, A Kenyan Case". Francis Muthwa 1985, p 20 (unpublished)

grassroots development. This process is undergone by groups assisted by their own local leaders.

To minimise economic risks for most grassroots projects, the DEP operates a micro-fund from which grants and revolving loans are administered to deserving socio-economic initiatives.

This encourages groups to attempt a wide range of projects, while at the same time giving projects the final push towards their completion.

Grassroot leaders are trained in basic skills to be able to operate community projects, eg water pump operation, servicing and maintenance, construction of water tanks, plumbing fundamentals, agricultural skills, starting and the care of a tree nursery, etc. This approach is intended to minimise grassroots dependence on professional services from our staff.

DEP has been innovative in its field work. This seems to be a crucially important element in grassroots participatory development. An example of one innovative approach comes from a programme for the physically disabled children in DEP. In this programme, communities have been encouraged to take care of their own disabled children by building 'small homes' for them, attached to the village-based primary schools. Parents and the community at large care for these children — they bring food for them and take them home over the weekends. The children live in the small homes attended by a full-time 'mother' and a watchman. This way, care for the disabled becomes decentralised and made a community responsibility.

Other DEP programmes with a high degree of innovation include the primary health care programme, water projects, cooperatives, etc.

Other development agencies have learnt from these innovations as much as DEP has learnt from their experiences.

Some bottle-necks in DEP

1. There appears to be slow growth towards maturity in tackling issues pertaining to social justice within grassroot communities. This phenomenon has surfaced in the following ways:

— It seems to be a slow process bringing some groups from 'project-level' activities to tackling issues of law and social justice within their immediate environment. One implicit explanation of this has been that the group leaders would play down such group initiatives which had the potential to endanger their job security at the hands of their regular employers. Another explanation is the unfounded fear of the authorities and those who practice the injustices. It was the people's sense of powerlessness that made them slow in taking initiatives to defend their constitutional rights and challenge sources of injustice.

— The 'grassroots' in most DEP groups have not yet achieved reliable or significant rises in incomes as a result of group projects. Without this

realisation, the groups will feel insecure in challenging the local exploitive elements, who may be the only source of credit and employment which has given them the assurance of survival so far.

— The DEP does not appear to have given adequate attention to the need to establish a Justice and Peace Commission network which would encourage and facilitate grassroots groups towards building a more just society.

2. Some of the rural élite, politicians and other influential personalities have sought to 'hijack' and control the DEP grassroots groups to serve their interests and ambitions. The grassroots groups, being so badly in need of any material offers to alleviate their immediate basic needs, often fall prey to these people. It takes a while before such groups realise they are being misused.

3. Many 'grassroot' group leaders were unemployed in spite of being responsible adults with families. Their group leadership, however, was basically voluntary. But humanly speaking, it may sometimes appear to be another form of exploitation, when the groups demand half their time for such services. This has happened often in DEP but efforts are being made to train as many voluntary leaders as possible to share the task more widely.

4. There have been some doubts and questions in DEP circles as to how soon awareness creating efforts should lead to economic development. Sometimes, there has appeared to be prolonged expectations of progress with little or no progress towards the establishment of income-generating activities. The fact is that awareness programmes should not appear to postpone economic returns for too long since the priority need of the grassroots is the alleviation of poverty. Awareness programmes should eventually lead to the realisation of the root causes of low standards of living, otherwise 'conscientisation that does not improve the economic lot of the poor will only end in frustration'. (Heredero in Fernandes, 1980:62.) The challenge in DEP presently is to consolidate the training of the 'grassroots' in socio-economic skills such as project management skills, book-keeping, co-operatives, baking, handicrafts, etc.

5. The other dilemma we have come across is the choice of the direction for programme expansion. This has in the past been characterised by the constant expansion of the size of service-teams at diocesan level and the creation of full-time deanery based DEP teams. The obvious danger in such an approach is the increasing administrative costs in salaries, transport, stationery, etc. The programme is working out an alternative approach towards these service expansions through decentralisation.

We choose to intensify and extend skill training and awareness creation among more and more voluntary grassroots leaders and facilitators. The more numerous they are the less the burden to themselves, as they share the

leadership roles more widely. This trend will lead to less and less need for services from the diocesan teams and therefore gradually such teams will either cease to expand or will have to be reduced in numbers thus relieving the programmes of salary and transport bills. The ultimate aim would be to create sustainable structures in future. This is a constant challenge at all levels of the programme.

6. It has been observed that DEP programmes at the grassroots level existed in isolated entities. In most cases, integration has not meant more than a mere coincidence of having participants from different programmes working on a common project, eg a cooperative endeavour or a community water project which brings together youth groups, women's groups, agriculture groups, etc, not as programme representatives but as individuals. Our analysis questions the adequacy of such an approach towards integration. Effective integration would have to bring together these different programmes under a structure which is representative, creating a forum for joint discussions, evaluation and planning. This strengthens individual groups within the community, thus creating more horizontal linkages to complement the already existing vertical linkages. The vertical structures have been common in our programmes, eg local women's committees, diocesan women's councils, etc. All other DEP programmes had similar vertical structures while horizontal networks to link them up at the grassroot level were either missing or too weak.

We have, however, introduced the formation of the Development Education Parish Committee (DEPCO), bringing together all grassroot group leaders and facilitators at parish level. Such a structure is helping to bridge the integration gap that existed between the programmes at the grassroot level. Some parishes have taken up this challenge while others are still in the process of doing so. One most important outcome of such horizontal linkages has been a better co-ordination of services delivered to these programmes. The grassroot groups have also developed a strong sense of support and 'belonging-together', necessary to tackle issues of social justice and the articulation of their common interests.

7. A fairly recent phenomenon has developed, what I may call the 'burning-out' of the DEP staff-members. This trend has surfaced in various facets. Some members of DEP teams had joined the programme with high motivation and expectations of an immediate transformation of the living standards of the grassroots, only to realise that great dreams sometimes take time to come true. Others have experienced a lack of support and encouragement which they so much needed to carry them through the challenges of the programme. Some staff may have overworked themselves and, lacking opportunities to undergo a period of reflection, have experienced burn-out.

These forces have sometimes led to resignations to look for 'greener pastures', more secure jobs or new challenges. Our challenge is how to reverse this trend or to make the best of it.

Conclusion

The participation of the grassroots in rural development implies a genuine effort to reverse the trends of development by creating the potential for maximum involvement of the marginalised communities in the process of development for all. In this process the grassroots are given a prominent role, not as tools for rural development but as subjects of development as well as co-beneficiaries of the fruits of their labour. Grassroots participation in planning, implementation, evaluation and sharing the fruits of development is the basis for equitable rural development. This process will not be realised without proper leadership formation and an independent organisational framework and some institutional support for the grassroots.

The Development Education Programme of the Catholic Diocese of Machakos is basically aimed at reaching the marginalised rural grassroots who are striving to better their living standards. This programme identifies the participatory development approach as the most effective approach for equitable rural development. Our intensive leadership and basic skills training programmes are intended to create the potential for local self-reliance and thus create less dependence on specialised professionalism, which has often tended to slow down participatory programmes. Finally I would like to point out that the long-term goals of DEP are not incompatible with that of the government development plans as stated in the most recent sessional paper No 1 of 1986 on Economic Management for Renewed Growth, which in part states:

"The urgent need is to renew economic growth in ways that will provide jobs for the growing labour force, prosperity for the mass of people in the rural areas, an equitable and widespread sharing of the benefits of growth, and a continuing provision of basic needs for all."

This can only be achieved through effective grassroots participation in rural development.

FOOTNOTE

1. In Mexico for example, as a result of their so-called 'permanent miracle' of the Green Revolution recorded in 1950-75, 40% of the population at the poorest end suffered a 38% drop in real income; only 55% of children between ages of 6 and 14 enjoyed access to basic education; 96% of the preschool population suffers from malnutrition (Frank, 1981:18).

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