

A DESCRIPTION AND PRELIMINARY ASSESSMENT  
OF SOUTH AFRICA'S  
NATIONAL COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

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**FOREWARD**

This paper has been written in response to requests from a number of individuals and organisations concerned with welfare and community development in the Durban area. They were having to respond to the new National Community Development Strategy.

Materials and seminars presented by officials of relevant government departments were found to be inadequate and confusing. They identified the need for a concise description of the origins of the strategy, and the structures for its implementation, in the context of parallel changes in regional and local authorities, and of community development theory and practice in South Africa.

This paper attempts to take the first steps towards answering that need. It is based in part on individual and group discussions, and on workshops, with people involved in and affected by the strategy. I am grateful indeed for the time people spent discussing their perspectives of the programmes.

Francie Lund

**ABBREVIATIONS**

CLO	Community Liaison Officer
IDC	Inter Departmental Committee
LC for CD	Local Committee for Community Development
NCDS	National Community Development Strategy
NRDAB	National Regional Development Advisory Board
PDP	Population Development Programme
RDA	Regional Development Association
RDAC	Regional Development Advisory Committee
RDS	Regional Development Strategy
RWB	Regional Welfare Board
SCLO	Senior Community Liaison Officer
WO	Welfare Organisation

## INTRODUCTION

In September, 1982, the President's Council commissioned an investigation into South Africa's population growth. Its task was to determine attainable ideal levels of population growth in the light of productivity needs, and in terms of demands on the country's national resources.

The Science Committee of the President's Council presented its Report on Demographic Trends in South Africa in March, 1983. It recommended the establishment of a Population Development Programme (PDP), which will be implemented by means of a National Community Development Strategy (NCDS).

Prior to this, the new Regional Development Strategy (RDS) was announced at the Good Hope Conference in 1981. It has subsequently become clear that the Local Committees for Community Development, which are the "grassroots" structures for the PDP and NCDS, are also the lowest structural tier for the implementation of the Regional Development Strategy.

All these strategies and programmes were formulated within the Department of Constitutional Development and Planning, and must be seen as part of the government's "reform initiatives".

It is possibly premature, in September 1985, to attempt an assessment of the NCDS. The first Local Committees for Community Development have been set up. At this point they exist only in Coloured and Indian areas. The programme has not yet, as far as is known, been initiated in African areas. However, it has potentially important implications for parallel planning in local authorities and regionalisation policies; it affects the field of social welfare; and it raises questions for community organisations in Coloured and Indian areas who are currently being approached by officials of the NCDS.

In this paper I will

1. briefly outline the major categories of organisations who have been doing community work, and who will be affected by the NCDS;
2. outline the major findings of the Science Committee's Report on Demographic Trends in South Africa, as they relate to the recommendation for a PDP and NCDS;
3. present the structures for implementation of the PDP, NCDS and RDS, with particular attention to grassroots personnel and committees;
4. consider the theoretical basis of the NCDS in terms of international community development trends; and finally,
5. discuss responses of some local welfare and community organisations to the NCDS.

#### COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT ORGANISATIONS

During 1984, senior officials of the Department of Constitutional Development and Planning organised conferences and seminars for people from welfare organisations in which the new National Community Development Strategy was presented and discussed. The link between the NCDS and the PDP was not initially very clear. What was clear was that this was the first time that South Africa, at an official state level, was to embark on a strategy for community development. As Groenewald (1984:121) explains, the strategy, together with the Development of Black Communities Act, 1984, reflects the formal institutionalisation of community development.

National Ministries for Community Development have been a common feature of less developed countries. Typically they have concerned themselves with adult education and mobilising the

untapped labour potential of villagers in rural areas. Their three or five year plans have run parallel to the national economic development plans, and to a large extent they have been seen to have failed. The reasons for these failures will be considered later.

South Africa's own Department of Community Development has not dealt with community development as commonly understood. While its manifesto includes the standard United Nations definition of community development, it has concerned itself more with the destruction and removal of existing communities. It has been responsible, inter alia, for the implementation of the Group Areas Act, and slums clearance.

A variety of organisations and agencies have been practising community development in the more accepted meaning of the term. As these are the bodies who will potentially be affected by the NCDS, it is worth looking briefly at them in terms of broad categories.

#### 1. Welfare organisations

The responsibility for social welfare services in South Africa has historically been a joint partnership between the state and voluntary welfare organisations (w.o's). W.o's are usually specialist organisations, dealing with a particular category of welfare client (e.g. the aged, physically handicapped, child and family welfare, rehabilitation of offenders). They employ professional social workers, who may practice case work, group work or community work. The state regulates the profession via inter alia the South African Welfare Council; w.o's in turn receive subsidies from the state for rendering welfare services.

Community work has been the most neglected of the social work methods - it has until recently received little attention. In the last decade more emphasis has been placed on community social work, though this has been constrained by lack of emphasis in

social work training, difficulties with devising a system for subsidisation of community work compared with casework, lack of supervisors with sufficient practical experience of community work, and, in many agencies, a reluctance to enter what is deemed to be a more "political" terrain. However in the face of these obstacles, community workers in some w.o's have engaged in significant community development work.

## 2. Local Authorities

In the past four years, community liaison officers have been established within the department of the Medical Officer of Health in Durban, Johannesburg and Cape Town City Councils. As professional social workers, they operate in coloured, Indian and white areas.

## 3. Department of Health

The State Health Department previously employed Family Planning Motivators. Approximately four years ago their name was changed to community development workers. The emphasis in their work changed away from promoting birth control to pursuing broader community development objectives.

## 4. Independent organisations

Significant contributions to community work and development have come from smaller, private, independently-funded organisations, sometimes co-operating with mainstream welfare organisations. These groups have frequently had a church or civic organisation base. Their terrains are various: pre-school care, housing, advice and information offices, transport and rent issues, community health. They characteristically take an advocacy role on behalf of the communities they serve, working at grassroots level, and increasingly working as lobby groups in attempts to influence and change government policy.

## 5. Community Development Officers in "homelands"

A relatively new type of community development worker, akin to Community Development Officers in less developed countries, is to be found in an organisation such as KwaZulu's Bureau for Community Development and Youth Affairs. Whatever problems the workers may be having in their practical work in mainly rural areas (where the primary foci are literacy classes and co-operatives) it is interesting that, before the new South African NCDS was introduced, such a Bureau has been the only "national" (i.e. state-introduced) attempt at a strategy based on a form of United Nations conception of the objectives and practice of community development.

Thus it can be seen that a wide variety of organisations have been, and are, practising community work, organisation and development. Their values, objectives and strategies vary widely, and cannot be discussed in detail here. The point to be made is that there has been no centrally initiated, state imposed and co-ordinated programme of community development, until the appearance of the National Community Development Strategy. It is tightly linked to the Population Development Programme, and it is to this that we now turn.



THE RECOMMENDATION FOR A POPULATION DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME

The Science Committee's Report on demographic trends in South Africa begins with a review of world population growth, with special reference to South Africa. It points out that demographic characteristics of white South Africans are similar to those of developed countries, while those of Indian, coloured and African people are more characteristic of less developed countries (LDCs).

While the fertility of all groups is declining, the total fertility rate (TFR) of different groups varies. Whites are already below replacement level; the rate for Indian and coloured people is 2,70 and 3,29 respectively, and the African TFR is over 5.

In considering factors influencing population growth, a range of national and international research is cited. The authors are careful not to attribute causal relationships, but stress the significant relationship between socio-economic factors and levels of fertility and mortality. They emphasise the influence on mortality and fertility decline played by, particularly:

1. economic change at the "micro and meso" level (as opposed to growth in per capita GNP)
2. women's participation in the labour force
3. adult literacy and educational levels (particularly those of women)
4. urbanisation
5. health and medical services, particularly when decentralised and accessible
6. contraceptive practices.

The assessment of the state family planning programme is that it has contributed to fertility decline, but has primarily reached a more urbanised elite who are already favourably disposed to family planning.

The Report states there is a difference between family planning and population planning. For the latter to be effective in keeping population growth in line with available resources,

"it will be necessary to create a socio-economic climate which paves the way for a desire to change fertility behaviour by stimulating the socio-economic factors that influence fertility trends". (Republic of South Africa, 1983)

What is the level of population growth which South Africa should strive towards? Using primarily Mostert and van Tonder's research of 1982, a section of the report "indicates the limits within which the various population groups are likely to grow" based on various assumptions about changing influences on fertility rates.

The demands of a growing population on a variety of natural resources are then discussed, using high and low population projections. The authors conclude that water is "the most important factor limiting South Africa's growth potential", and a population of between 70 and 80 million is the maximum that can be supported by available water resources.

The target of 80 million will be achieved by striving for a total fertility rate of 2,1 for all race groups by the year 2020. Toward this end, the Science Committee recommended the establishment of a national population programme, whose aim would be to raise the standard of living and quality of life for all South Africans (i.e. "stimulat(e) the socio-economic factors that influence fertility trends").

STRUCTURES FOR, AND LINKS BETWEEN THE PDP, THE NCDS, AND THE RDS

The announcement of the PDP and NCDS, and description of their objectives and structures came from the Department of Constitutional Development and Planning. This department explained that both programmes would be implemented through the then Department of Health, which has subsequently been re-named the Department of National Health and Population Development.

Among the reasons given for lodging the programmes within the health department were that it:

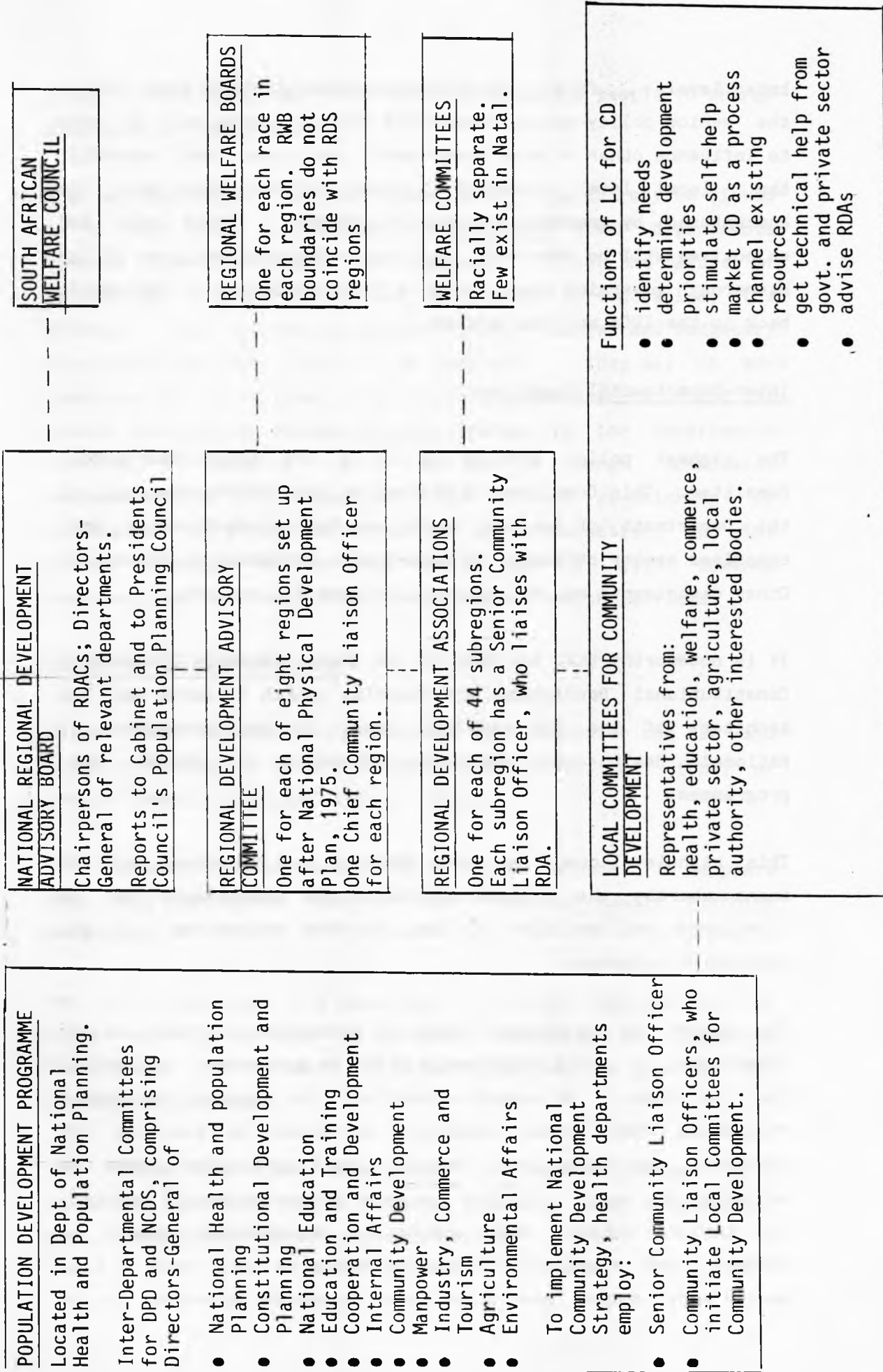
"has established a complete infrastructure for family planning and this structure can be fully utilised for the population programme; (....) is already co-operating with private health and family planning agencies, welfare agencies and development agencies to promote health, welfare and family planning (....); and has an infrastructure which undertakes and can promote community development". (Republic of South Africa, 1983:221).

Before considering the structures which have been set up to implement these policies, a key quotation from the Report demonstrates quite clearly the link between the PDP and NCDS.

"Community development is not a project with an aim of its own - it is a modus operandi for attaining the objectives of a population programme. The aims and objectives of a community development programme should be the same as those of a population programme. Community development can therefore be seen as a decentralisation mechanism for the implementation of a population programme". (Republic of South Africa, 1983:221).

The structures laid down are exceedingly complex. (Some of the organisation flow-charts put out by the Department of Constitutional Development and Planning are indeed, quite bewildering). It may be helpful to view them in terms of two

FIGURE 1: STRUCTURES FOR IMPLEMENTATION OF PDP, NCDS, RDS, AND FIT WITH WELFARE BODIES



broad levels: first, the Inter-Departmental Committees (IDCs), the senior policy-making committees where attempts will be made to influence other related departments' policies; and secondly, the local level Community Liaison Officers who will be encountered by grassroots community workers. Their role and objectives will be examined, and then a description given of the hierarchy governing them, working from the bottom up the ladder back to the IDCs and the Cabinet.

#### Inter-Departmental Committee

The highest policy body in the PDP is the Inter-Departmental Committee. This Committee is chaired by the Director-General of the Department of National Health and Population Planning and comprises senior officials of departments indicated in Figure 1. Other departments may be co-opted for specific projects.

It is noteworthy that the Head of the Social Planning Division of Constitutional Development and Planning (which Division was the architect of the PDP and NCDS) moved to the Department of National Health and Population Planning to direct the programmes.

This high-level committee meets monthly, and considers ways and means whereby the policies of respective departments can be formulated and modified in line with the objectives of the population programme.

The Report of the Science Committee gives some pointers as to directions in which departments might be encouraged to modify their policies. As regards education, for example, the Report recommends that urgent attention be given to training of teachers, new educational models, and a particular focus on education for women. In the fields of urbanisation and housing, the authors suggest that increasing urbanisation should be allowed, and standards for housing should be less rigid - i.e. house more people even if at lower standards (exposure to an

urban climate being one factor which predisposes people to change attitudes to family size).

Thus at this senior, central state level, the IDC may be viewed as a body which will attempt to influence other departments towards the objectives of the programme. Given the nature of specialised, compartmentalised government bureaucracies, the effects, if any, of the IDC alone on policy changes and budgetary re-allocations are likely to be long-term. They may be more immediate if, as is likely, the policy recommendations of the IDC accord with policy changes already underway in the departments involved. Examples would be the de Lange Commission recommendations for education; the current re-thinking of legislation affecting influx control and urbanisation; and the policy changes in the new Health Act of 1977 towards decentralised, accessible and comprehensive health services.

#### Community Liaison Officers

Welfare and community organisations will encounter the PDP and NCDS in the person of the Community Liaison Officer, (CLO) or Senior Community Liaison Officer (SCLO).

The CLO usually has a background in Social Science. It appears that some appointees are in fact formerly Family Planning Motivators.

The CLO is employed by a department of health, and his or her first task is to set up a Local Committee for Community Development (LC for CD), in order to achieve the aims of the population programme.

Such Committees are constituted of representatives from education, commerce, health welfare, commerce, local authorities, town planning and "other interested bodies".

A description of the functions of these LCs for CD are summarised in Figure 1.

As far as can be ascertained, the CLO initiates work in an area by approaching the local authority for a list of formal welfare organisations and other potentially interested bodies. These are visited, and informed of the objectives of the programme, and of the intention to set up a LC for CD. CLOs in the Natal region have been at pains to point out the voluntary nature of participation in the programme, and to understate their role as state employees.

Representatives of the programmes have stressed that a LC for CD:

- 1) need not be racially segregated - though they probably will be de facto because people live in segregated residential areas;
- 2) need not be entirely new creations - it may be possible that a committee already exists which, if expanded, could fulfil the role of a LC for CD;
- 3) will be "elected and chosen by the people themselves" - but "please take into account they should be multi-disciplinary, in terms of physical, social, economic and constitutional objectives".

No limit is placed on the number of LCs for CD in an area. It has, however, been suggested that if there are many in an area, they could form an umbrella body for representation on the Regional Development Association (RDA).

After meeting with various organisations, a formal meeting is held where the LC for CD is inaugurated, and the members decide on a constitution. It appears that no regulations are imposed on these committees, but guidelines for their functions are provided.

A CLO has explained that the geographical boundaries for the Committees are flexible. An attempt is made, however, to draw the boundaries such that industrial centres can be included.

The Committee does not itself generate resources, but is seen to be a body which can channel existing resources. In other words, the purpose is to bring together, in one committee, representatives of the local private sector and a variety of organisations who might be assisted by them. As a CLO said, in the past industry has "given money to charity on a random basis"; the programme is saying, co-ordinate and channel this through the new Local Committee for Community Development.

One of the first tasks of the Committee is to assist the CLO in collecting information for the Community Study. The Workbook for the Community Study details a wide range of information to be gathered, on, inter alia, housing, health, education, welfare, sport, recreation and leadership. Its stated aims are to "~~compile a profile of the Comunity/Region for purposes of the PDP~~", and "to evaluate the progress and objectives of the PDP".

The senior CLO in an area, while employed by a department of health, is the link between LCs for CD and the Regional Development Association. There is one SCLO and one RDA for each sub-region (Natal has 11 sub-regions). RDA's comprise representatives of local authorities, the state, the private sector, and welfare committees (where these exist). Town clerks appear to play an important facilitative role.

The next tier in the heirarchy is the Regional Development Advisory Committee, of which there is one for each of the eight regions established by the National Physical Development Plan of 1975 (Natal is Region E) The PDP has one Chief Community Liaison Officer in each region, and Regional Welfare Boards (RWBS) are represented on the RDAB (though RWB boundaries do not at present coincide with those of the eight regions).



Finally, RDAC's are represented on the National Regional Development Advisory Board (NRDAB), which consists of chairpersons of the eight RDACs and Directors-General of a number of relevant departments. The South African Welfare Council is also represented. This NRDAB reports to the Cabinet and to the President's Council's Demographic Planning Committee (sometimes translated from Afrikaans as Population Planning Council).

### THEORETICAL ASSUMPTIONS UNDERLYING "COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT"

Neither the theory nor the practice of "community development" is neutral or value-free. Behind every programme or policy lies, explicitly or implicitly, a set of assumptions concerning social order, and social change.

Both words "community" and "development", have separately generated numerous debates - when put together, there is considerable scope for misunderstanding and confusion. The jargon of community development has arrived in official circles in South Africa and an assessment of the NCDS (as of any other community development programme) must be based on an analysis of what terms are being used, by which people, with what objectives?

Community development is at the very least about deliberate, purposive intervention in social change processes. Beyond this, programmes differ widely in terms of their conception of how a community or society should be structured, and what strategies to use to affect social change. Community development programmes may be crudely categorised in terms of which change objectives are stressed: a change in people's psycho-social attitudes, a change in material conditions, or a change in the power and authority structures, locally and/or nationally, which govern people's lives at the local level (these categories are of course not necessarily mutually exclusive). (Lund and van Harte, 1980: 11)

The NCDS in South Africa comes at a time when the failure of most national community development efforts in less developed countries has been widely recognised and accepted. The theoretical underpinnings of the "conventional wisdom" of international community development lay in structural-functional social theory and modernisation theory (evidence of this can be found in the writing of the "founding fathers" of Community Development such as Batten, Harper and Dunham).

Analyses of the causes of the patent failure of "mainstream" community development come from a variety of perspectives, e.g. Schwartz, 1981, McPherson 1982, and Frank, 1969. While their theoretical bases differ, there is general agreement that the most mistaken assumptions of the United Nations type of national community development programmes were:

1. They assumed a harmony of interests between the central state and local communities.
2. Local communities were seen as homogeneous groups in social, economic and political terms.
3. Communities were seen to be viable autonomous units who could come to be self-reliant; they were not seen as inextricably bound up with the national economy.
4. The rhetoric of community development stresses "felt needs", i.e. communities should formulate their own priorities both because they have a right to, and because they will be more motivated to work collectively on something they urgently want. However, this conflicted with the reality of national community development programmes, which were formulated at state or regional level and imposed from above.

The NCDS has been created as a vehicle for the implementation of the PDP, as has been mentioned. The objectives of the PDP have been stated as "improving the quality of life". The objectives of the NCDS have been listed specifically as the following:

1. Community involvement and participation
2. Self-help programmes - community responsibility and initiative
3. Development of human potential. Mobilisation of resources
4. Co-ordination
5. Preventative and developmental programmes
6. Improvement of basis of authority in the communities
7. Development of services and organisations
8. Acknowledgement and preservation of human dignity.

This list in itself looks straight forward enough, almost comforting, one might say, though one or two objectives appear to be broad statements about human values, and one wonders what is meant by "the basis of authority".

One needs to turn to papers and speeches by personnel of the Department of Constitutional Development and Planning for a clearer idea of the theoretical basis of the NCDS.

Breytenbach (1984:68) states that, although the various approaches to development can not be rigidly dichotomised, there is a difference between the basic needs approach and community development:

"'Basic need' fulfilment (according to the socialistic interpretation) is supposed to work from top to bottom, that is a greater responsibility on government to provide these needs - in other words there is a greater responsibility on the part of government to redistribute wealth and well-being. 'Community development' is alternatively supposed to work from bottom to top, i.e. a greater responsibility on the people to utilise opportunities through greater self-reliance. The role of government is here considerably reduced, although not completely eliminated".

Community development, which he says is "generally associated with free enterprise systems", is in terms of the new constitution, classified as "own affairs".

Breytenbach discusses community development as part of the current strategy of decentralisation and devolution of powers to local government level:

"...the new Constitution not only implies a great priority for local government in the sense that it is an entrenched subject, but it is the focus of the devolution policy and forms part of the policy of community development that is again part of the government's population development programme". (1984:67)

Two things about the government's thinking about community development are clear in Breytenbach's paper:

- o it is not about redistribution or re-allocation of resources at a central level
- o it is potentially seen as a programme to strengthen new local authorities.

The first point is reinforced in a paper delivered by the Chief of Social Planning, Department of Constitutional Development and Planning.

"The Government provides the necessary opportunities for development in those fields which fall under its jurisdiction, but the onus rests upon the individual and his community to undertake constructive efforts to improve its socio-economic position". (Regional Welfare Board for Durban and Natal, 1984:4).

This is the language of United Nations Community Development - it does not take into account that "self help" and "helping the people to help themselves" are empty terms for people who live in poverty. People whose lives are a struggle to meet basic needs are hardly well-placed to "improve their own quality of life" by somehow "improving their socio-economic position" by "constructive effort".

The NCDS also assumes a harmony of interests between central government and local communities, and within local communities:

"This kind of development will eventually lead to a meaningful contribution by the local community to the national effort". (Fourie, 1984:3),

and

"...community development provides an opportunity and a means by which the potential of each individual in this country can be utilized and thus contribute to social, economic and political stability. This development implies changes which are not to be confused with anarchy or destabilisation".

One wonders, in 1985, what "the national effort" is? This language takes little account of the realities of South Africa today, where not only are black townships completely alienated from central government, but there are also deep divisions as to what form of future society people are working towards, and what strategies to pursue.

## RESPONSES TO THE NCDS

In this section an attempt will be made to summarise concerns and questions about the programme which have been made by some welfare and community organisations. The material has been collected through attendance at workshops and a symposium where personnel from the PDP met with social workers, local authority personnel and others to promote the programme and answer questions; through group discussions with community organisations; and through individual discussions. It should be noted that, as this work was conducted in the Durban area, some concerns may reflect particularly local issues, and responses to the way the strategy has been promoted in this area only. It seems, however, that the majority of concerns could be generalised for other areas.

People and organisations who otherwise have substantially different opinions as to the role of welfare and the pursuit of social and political change have had two major common criticisms, which can be simply stated as:

- "Oh no, not more top-heavy structures and committees";  
and
- "once again we are being consulted (i.e. informed) after the whole plan has been devised and set in motion".

For all the allusions to community involvement, consultation and participation, in the documents and speeches promoting the programme, the way it has been presented brings to mind one definition of community participation:

"You tell us what you want from the choices we give you and we might bear it in mind in deciding what you are going to get".

Another common criticism has been of the naive and unrealistic view of "self-help" and "upliftment" in areas where there is a daily struggle for survival.

It will be useful now to discuss the concerns of welfare organisations and community organisations (such as residents associations) separately. To an extent it is an artificial distinction, as many social workers in formal welfare organisations, for example, share the concerns of the community organisations.

#### Formal Welfare Organisations

Welfare organisations will be affected by the NCDS, and many organisations in this area have expressed unease about it. The promoters of the NCDS have consistently referred to the need for co-ordination with welfare bodies. The various levels of welfare will have representation on the LCs for CD, RDAs, RDACs and NRDAB. The promoters have said that the aim is not to take over the work of existing community social work, but to work in an inter-disciplinary way in the best interests of communities.

It is in fact early yet to attempt to assess the impact of the NCDS on the social welfare field. However, some pointers do exist as to possible effects.

1. Regional Welfare Board boundaries do not overlap with the eight regions of the Regional Development Strategy. Personnel of the Department of Constitutional Development and Planning told a regional Welfare Board Symposium in Durban in 1984 that attention was being given to this, and an attempt would be made to re-draw RWB areas to fit with RDS regions.



2. The government subsidy system for professional social work posts and agencies is under review. The late Dr. Heydorn, of the welfare section of the Department of Internal Affairs, explained at the same Durban symposium that the subsidy system will take into account regional needs: "Internal Affairs will not in future look only at agency needs - it will be influenced by Regional Welfare Boards and Regional Development Associations", in considering agency applications for community work subsidies.
  
3. A primary concern of welfare organisations is: who are the CLOs going to be? How will they be trained? Who will supervise them?

CLOs will have social science backgrounds, be people with "maturity and vision", and be able to "communicate with local authorities and with the poor". Consideration is being given to co-ordinating the training for community development through universities and technikons. How this will affect existing training remains to be seen.

The shortage of experienced community workers in existing social work agencies is well-known, as is the scarcity of senior social workers with practical experience to supervise them. Social work is jealous of its professional status, and pays great attention to standards, training and the regulation of the profession. One suspects there is a sense in which w.o's feel threatened by this new breed of community development worker. Community social work has been sorely neglected by w.o's in the past, and is now being promoted through a structure which is not under the control of the social work profession.

4. Meanwhile the Council for Social and Associated Workers has been investigating ways of getting "community developers" who are not registered social workers, registered as an "associated profession", in terms of the Social and Associated Workers Act, 1978. A series of regional working groups were set up to assist the Council in its deliberations. At least the Natal working group, and probably others, felt that it was not at all imperative that community developers be registered - it would in principle and in practice be unwise and impossible.

#### Independent Community Organisations

A variety of less formal organisations in the welfare and civic field have expressed concern about the NCDS. Organisations in this category include, for example, those in the pre-school field, housing action groups, residents associations, cultural and sporting groups. They have been approached by the CLOs and asked to sit on the LCs for CD. They have on the whole resisted involvement. While different groups have different reservations, what follows is a discussion of some of the salient issues.

As has been mentioned, the PDP and NCDS have been presented simultaneously with, and linked to, the Regional Development Strategy, and the new constitutional developments. At the same time there are major changes taking place in the structure of local authorities, and at sub-regional level Regional Service Councils are being introduced.

There is considerable unease about the role of the Local Committees for Community Development in this shifting context. The architects of the NCDS have repeatedly stated that these LCs for CD are not statutory bodies, and that they are not linked to local authorities.

However local authorities are represented on LCs for CD and on

the Regional Development Association. This raises problems for many organisations. First, there are those who reject any dealings with structures linked with the tri-cameral parliament. They take a non-participatory stance in principle.

This leads to the question: What do organisations stand to lose by non-participation? At the formal level, the answer appears to be: nothing. The LCs for CD do not themselves handle or generate funds or control a budget: they are a co-ordinating channel between the private sector and the welfare field. Any organisation is in principle free to raise its own funds from what sources it can. The only money that so far seems to have been made available to agencies by the PDP is R100 000 to be spent on youth projects in this International Youth Year of 1985.

At an informal level, however, LCs for CD may become influential lobby groups in the welfare field. The people likely to join are likely to be representatives from better-off groups and organisations, and from those who do not have ideological reservations about the government's community development strategy. They could become a barrier between community groups and local authority resources, in a similar manner to that in which the Urban Foundation has in some instances been a barrier between community organisations and specific private sector funding sources ("don't see us, see the Urban Foundation - we have given our 'corporate social responsibility' money to them"). The price of non-participation could mean exclusion from a new centre of influence as to how resources for community development get allocated locally.

For this to be a serious risk, it would require that the private sector (in the form of Chambers of Industry and Commerce, Agricultural Associations, companies) itself takes the LCs for CD seriously. Little evidence exists as yet as to what their stance will be. When the PDP and NCDS were announced to a conference of businessmen and business associations in Johannesburg, their response was apparently lukewarm-to-negative. The chief

criticism seemed to be against more top-heavy structures and central government planning. It is likely that the private sector is also concerned about the financial implications of the new Regional Service Councils. Apart from smaller firms, it is difficult to imagine influential wealthy private sector representatives taking the LCs for CD seriously.

A related question is whether the latent intention of the LCs for CD is to bring together more moderate elements in an attempt to counter-balance groups making more radical demands in the sphere of civic and community issues. The answer to this must surely be 'yes'. The government has embarked on a programme of reform which involves some devolution of power to the local level. Local level politics will become increasingly important; the new local authorities will need to gain credibility. In the face of this, community issues have become highly politicised, and articulated by pressure groups and leaders who command substantial popular support.

The NCDS seems to ignore entirely the current political crisis in black residential areas. Any programme which has the objective of strengthening the basis of black local authorities is at present destined for failure.

There is concern also about the Community Study which the CLO undertakes with the help of the new local committies. The sections dealing with Basic Safety, Community Relations and Leadership have met with particular suspicion - people question this as a subtle form of political surveillance. This reaction may be branded as paranoid or "conspiracy -theory" thinking. However it is widely known that black social workers in the Department of Co-operation and Development have in the past been asked to report on political activities in their areas. It is in this context and with the reality of communities who are justifiably suspicious of government policies, that this concern about developing a "community profile" must be seen.

The Community Study is viewed sceptically for another reason. One may characterise this reaction as: "More research? We know what the needs are in our area, and they have to do with poverty and no democratic channels through which our grievances can be redressed, to find new ways of distributing resources. We don't want research to establish what self-help programmes are needed - we want full participation in decision-making at local and national levels".

A final question being raised - and it is perhaps the most common is: "Is this all actually an elaborate disguise for family planning?" It is most important that this question not be glibly answered in the affirmative, as is tempting to do.

The government has clearly accepted that promoting birth control has little effect on fertility rates. The arguments presented in the Science Committee Report on factors influencing population growth are finally inconclusive and full of tautologies. However, they recognise that family planning must be accompanied by socio-economic development and an improvement in the quality of life. They accept what is internationally accepted, that there is a relationship between child mortality and fertility rates, and they accept the false logic in the argument that goes: "If they didn't have so many children, they would be better off". Though there is some reference to dated notions of "cultural resistance" and "traditional attitudes", the Report on the whole places a much stronger emphasis on changes in people's material conditions being the strong influencing variable on fertility behaviour.

The Report recommends a population development programme which is broader than a family planning programme. The promotion of family planning in the recommendations regarding health takes second place to the need for decentralised, accessible and affordable health services.

Thus it is too simplistic to judge the programme as "family planning in disguise", at least at the moment. That judgement must wait until the CLOs have been in the field for a longer period, until it can be seen what aspects of their broadly-defined roles they emphasise, and which departments and programmes they select for greatest attention. Also, it is too early as yet to judge what the primary direction of influence the IDC will have.

The real poverty of the NCDS lies elsewhere. It fails to take into account a wealth of international experience which has shown that this kind of centrally imposed, top down national programme cannot succeed.

Its central flaws are two. Firstly, it is not about a re-allocation of resources such that communities are enabled to help themselves. It locates the problem primarily within impoverished communities, and then attempts to persuade local private sector institutions to "help their own".

Secondly, it fails to take into account present black aspirations for meaningful political power, and the reality of groups who are deeply distrustful of being co-opted into state structures if they do not hold the possibility of delivering more goods than "self-help programmes".

The concept of "community development" has been hi-jacked by the state in the NCDS. The term "community" has finally become synonymous with race. Segregate people in terms of the Group Areas Act, and it becomes possible to talk of "the Chatsworth Community", or "the Umlazi Community", without having to say Indians or Africans. Define "development" loosely as "improving the quality of life", and "people improving their socio-economic conditions". Then community development means segregated races helping themselves, at a local level, in their own residential areas.

This kind of "community development" does not address the distribution of incomes such that some "communities" are precluded from involvement in self-help programmes. It does not address the problem of unequal access to, and power over, local authorities who make decision regarding civic services and facilities.

In a situation where "community" means "race", and "development" ignores structural constraints which impact on each other to keep some people poor and powerless, it is to be expected that the National Community Development Strategy will be viewed with scepticism by many agencies and organisations who are being approached to participate in it.

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