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MANAGEMENT AT GRASSROOTS LEVEL FOR INTEGRATED RURAL DEVELOPMENT IN AFRICA WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO CHURCHES

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ABSTRACT

The paper begins by questioning the relevance and utility of Western management models and techniques in an African rural development setting of a minimally controllable environment. It goes on to review the problems and paradoxes of incorporating development into existing church structures and further suggests that the "integrated" development approach used so far and based on multi-sector coupling has proven to be disfunctional.

It is suggested that a human and community-centred approach based on a five-element 'functional-group' system answers the above shortcomings, in part because it is derived from actual development implementation experience. The features of such a system are explained and the possible role of the church as an "intermediate organisation" is discussed.

The paper concludes by looking at some of the management implications of such a human and community-centred approach. In addition tentative suggestions for more appropriate African management features are made, based on community rather than individual or institution, dialogue rather than paper work and respect for traditional social systems.
1. INTRODUCTION

Increasingly 'poor management' as opposed to 'shortage of resources' is being identified as responsible for the limited achievements in induced development in Africa. This is particularly so for development projects of the "integrated" variety. One result of this has been to demand more detailed project planning and increased management training (preferably abroad) for those involved in development projects. Such training is more often than not technocratic and defined by that which is given and in fashion in the West. Topics are taken from a checklist or menu skills (bookkeeping, personnel management, data collection, planning, communication, leadership, etc) which are obtained from Western management models and methods. This is true for staff at both the national and grassroots levels. Inherent is thus the a priori assumption that Western methods are universalistic and that better applications of these methods are a relevant answer to the negative experiences of twenty years of development management praxis.¹

This paper questions the above assumption in relation to grassroots development in Africa. There are three main premises underlying this questioning, one is specifically in relation to the Church's involvement in rural development.

The first premise is that to date the induced development management techniques and methods employed so far have not been particularly relevant to the operational situation of projects, their managers and their participants because they have not been derived from the environment and reality in which they are meant to function. Naturally there are parts of the Western methods which can be utilized but they are not sufficient in themselves.

The second premise is that there are unique organisational problems related to the inclusion of development management organisation


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in Church structures. The situation is somewhat paradoxical in that it is precisely the historically grown formal Church structures which are embedded in grassroots (parish, congregation) community organization which themselves form one impediment to effective development management.

The third premise is that the form of rural development integration utilized so far has been disfunctional. The recent focus has been on integration as a combination of technocratic sectors (Moris 1981: 11) rather than as a people-related holism. Not only has such an approach overloaded fragile management capacities, it has also mitigated against the search for an integration which has as its focus actual human development processes. Rural people have thus remained the object rather than the subject of rural development, albeit now of a supposedly integrated form with its obligatory participation component (Uphoff, Cohen and Goldsmith 1979).

The foregoing has obviously not gone unrecognized: for the gap between theory and practice of rural development can be regarded as a "structural anomaly" in Kuhn's sense (1970: p.97). The enormous variety of development organisations mushrooming in the late seventies can be viewed as a recognition and response to this anomaly; so leading to a search for Alternatives for Development in the Eighties. A search not emanating from abstract considerations but from a confrontation with and reflection on the disappointment of development achievement at all levels, but especially with and for the poorest.

By and large the subsequent alternatives chosen in organisational form and management method for rural development have been donor initiated most predominantly in the arena of non-governmental organisations (NGOs). Not surprisingly the alternatives and innovations chosen have been related to a donor agencies own experience, specific role in and perspective on rural development. It is difficult to regard most of these alternative forms and methods as indigenous to Africa.

Thus there is a need to more actively search for management styles and approaches which are derived from the operational realities, values, cultures and ecologies of induced rural development on this continent.

3. The estimated number of NGOs in OECD countries is over 400,000 large number in the overseas development field. I.D.R. 1980/2/3 p. 72.
The final part of this paper is therefore a tentative first step in the direction of an appropriate organisational approach to induced rural development in Africa and its possible implications for churches. However, much further research and discussion will be needed if we are to recognize, value and define indigenous organisational forms and management approaches which will improve African rural development praxis.

2. SHORTCOMINGS OF WESTERN MANAGEMENT PARADIGMS FOR GRASSROOTS DEVELOPMENT IN AFRICA

There are various shortcomings of Western management approaches in African rural development noted by current authors (Moris 1981; Rondinelli; 1983; Hyden 1983). The most significant is the fact that such approaches have been derived from a Western historical experience which has little comparability to that of Africa and as importantly that they are being applied in a completely different physical context and socio-economic and political setting.

Western management approaches have grown from a socio-cultural situation of increasing linear rationality, an economic determinant of increasing productivity and most importantly the technological capability to control many aspects of the environment. In this, Western man has been subordinated to the demands of the economic system and has, in addition, adopted a basically predictive mode to the methods and solutions of management problems. The adoption of a "predictive" basis to management is congruent to and effective in an environment which is predominantly a nature artificielle. Thus the various Western management models frequently lead to a rational scheduling of resources and a programmed sequencing of events giving limited, if any, regard to the externalities; for these are presumed to be in some way controlled or controllable. Not surprisingly, therefore, a development project is often a "blue printing" of procedures steps and resources to achieve a clearly defined (operational) goal. If and when such an approach fails the reaction is to demand more information next time and blueprint in even more detail.

The transplanting to Africa-Western styles, approaches and methods is of course not restricted to management only. But in terms of how development is defined; researched and understood and how Africans indeed see

4. "Blue print" planning assumes that "the present is known, the future knowable and one can control events sufficiently to achieve a knowable future". (Roling & de Zeeuw 1983).
themselves in the process, the transplanting of external values and models has been of far-reaching significance.

In Chambers (1983, pp 28-46) terms it has turned "insiders" to "outsiders", leading to their non-recognition or devaluing of indigenous knowledge, experiences and styles.

A further feature of such a transplanted method is a -for the West - valid assumption that the people involved in project design and implementation adopt the same rationality in their actions and decisions. Transactions seldom need to be face to face and the persons involved will try to function as a cog-in-a-wheel which is the requirement of their organisational setting. In other words that they will do their job in a way which is consistent with the instrumental rationality of the organisation.

Does the foregoing hold true for rural Africa?

Whichever way one looks at it the answer must be "no" or at best "only a little".

The dominant economic mode in rural Africa is one of subsistence farming with only a limited penetration of a market economy and many constraints to its operation (Hyden 1980).

This mode is supported by cultural values, beliefs, myths, social organisations, technological systems and infrastructures which differ significantly from the West. There are two aspects of the rural African setting which are an important polarity to the Western environment. Firstly, the physical environment is far from predictable. The acknowledgement of this fundamental of rural existence is manifest in the African small-holder farming system; for such systems seek to minimize risk in an unpredictable environment rather than to just maximize output. Uncertainty of the presence and effects of rain, pests, diseases, floods, physical access, supplies, fuel, commodities agricultural inputs, prices levels, health, transport, communication and the strong influence of the seasons all contribute to the basic rural insecurity of life and of physical and social reproduction. (Chambers, Longhurst and Pacey, 1981). The environment in Africa is far from controlled or controllable.
In addition, practically every African is involved in farming irrespective of their function in organised society. Farming is still an intrinsic part of African human nature. As Hyden (1980) demonstrates, this leaves an exit option and allows a less than total commitment and subservience to the formal economy (be it market or otherwise) and to government administration. This is of direct relevance to the question of which management approaches are viable in Africa.

A second aspect of African reality which is of consequence for management is the operation of an economy of affection. Such an economy is not based on fond emotions per se but rather as Hyden (1983 a:6) defines it "........... networks of supportive relations and exchanges which reflect a social structure in which mutual trust is difficult to extend beyond the confines of given ascriptive units: clan, village, ethnic group, etc. It is a type of economy which prevails in a context where social stratification has not consolidated into economic classes; where the "objective" economic conditions giving rise to such a phenomena are beginning to become decisive in shaping social organisations".

Such an economy permeates, influences and gives resilience to the social economy (Hyden 1983: 0-16; Chambers 1983: 111) and is of direct consequence for the possibility of operating a scientific/objective management system along Western lines. It needs to be recognized that, even in the West, management is more than a pure set of functionally linked aims, methods and techniques; management has itself a culture of selected styles, premises and values (Drucker 1958; Handy 1979).

So is it in Africa where to a significant degree extra-organisational factors are permitted and indeed expected to influence both decisions and behaviour. This is a logical consequence, to a far-reaching politicization of decision-making (Rondinelli 1983: 85).

Together, the uncertainties of the environment, the operation of the economy of affection as a dominant socio-economic mode, the limited subservience of rural people to organisational demands and the politicization of organisational functioning do not provide the prerequisites for a successful application of many Western management approaches for rural development in Africa.
African rural reality would appear to demand a greater flexibility in programme design and implementation with less reliance on programming and scheduling. One can argue the need for a more responsive and synthesizing approach to rural development management in Africa. In the West a responsive approach is sometimes referred to as "contingency management", (Newstrom et al: 1975). Yet, whatever the title, experience has shown that Western management culture and technique is not in itself an adequate answer.

There is a need for an indigenous management approach which can plan, respond, synthesize, learn and adapt as well as to accommodate to the varied exigencies of the external and internal environment.

Such an approach proximates much more to the operational situation of rural development managers. The need for a more indigenous and relevant African management approach must be recognized and consciously sought if rural development management practice is to improve on a long-term basis and without sole continual reliance on non-African inputs, experiences and methods.

In closing this section it is instructive to ask why Western Management approaches are still being applied virtually lock, stock and barrel to African rural development. In my view it is because such approaches are demanded by donors and wanted by recipients. Donor agents require recipients who talk the same language, demonstrate the same values and structure themselves in the same way. Comparabilities give supposedly improved communication and confidence in the money transfer process. Yet these comparabilities have been demonstrated (Moris 1981: 16-30) to be often disfunctional in a grassroots development setting.

Recipient organisations are placed in a dilemma. Implicitly, experienced rural development practitioners, especially in churches, acknowledge and accommodate externalities in their functioning. Yet they cannot admit these in their own structure or donor relations because such accommodations are often viewed as contaminations to ethical/objective money-giving/receiving and utilizing. In addition, too few recipients have the self-confidence to argue against Western management methods and often are trained such that they are unaware of or devalue the learning from their experiences which may contradict perceived Western management wisdom. Potential "insiders" are made "outsiders".
In the final analysis however, it is precisely the recipients who are in a position to recognize and define development (as opposed to the media and the professionals). We will need to draw on them and their experiences to formulate what is appropriate management for grassroots development in Africa.

1. INCORPORATING DEVELOPMENT INTO CHURCH STRUCTURES

It is beyond the scope and intention of this paper to review the historical role and growth of the church in rural development. In addition it is incorrect to treat the church in Africa as a homogeneous entity or monolithic in terms of its development approach. However, there are some features of the church in Africa, especially those originating from the West, which offer sufficient commonalities to allow some observations to be made.

Over the last twenty years, in general, the church has shifted from a purely spiritual to a "whole-person" view of mankind. This has been reflected in its creation of development departments and the huge diversity of projects now being undertaken.

The point of importance is that the church, in Africa perhaps more than any other institution, is in a unique development position because of its relations to rural people in an organised way and on a very large scale; and the relationship is founded on human motivation and free-will rather than dominance and coercion. It is a reality that trade unions, political parties, government agencies and other possible institutions for African rural development seldom have the self-willed membership of so many of a country's population (Barrett 1983).

Obviously, the form and content of African church structures, often inherited from mother churches, have reflected the churches' primary mission of the spiritual development and pastoral care of people. In addition the skills developed within and by the church have been those needed to serve that mission. The results which have and are still being achieved by the church in mobilizing and involving rural people are impressive. Yet there is a paradox and there are problems when it comes including development activities within church structures whose historical derivation has been for other purposes.
The paradox is that the church structures, skills and activities which have led to such a good rural community organisation themselves pose significant obstacles to the incorporation of material development activities; especially when the method of funding is on a per project basis. In this respect there is a difference between the church and other non-governmental organisations (NGOs) in that the latter have as a major task developing grassroots organisations, while on the other hand they are not necessarily encumbered by the presence of well-developed structures which have evolved to achieve different aims.

A look at the demands made by and problems of development management in churches may serve to illustrate the points made above.

a) Responsibility and Authority

There is a traditional allocation of responsibility at all levels of church organisation from congregations, through churches, parishes and diocese to national organisation. Does one try to integrate development activities into these structures or create a parallel organisation, or try to combine the two in some way? How do traditional authority and responsibilities of, say, the Parish Minister relate to (semi-) secular development activities? What role do elders have? With whom does a church development worker have a contract of employment; who does selection and how?

How additional responsibilities caused by development projects are divided is often a key issue and is related to the next problem of of new skills and competences.

b) Skills and Competences

Rural development undertaken so far by the church in Africa is for various (funding) reasons a predominantly material affair. This demands new skills and competences which cannot be expected of the churches' own workers; so, often people need to be employed.

It is only natural that economy of affection factors will play a role in selection. This can and does lead to a choice of development project workers whose objective competence for the task may be less than desired but who do adequately fulfil affection (e.g. religious) criteria.
An additional problem is that the inclusion of new activities within, say, a Parish of a type in which the Minister cannot be expected to have competence can be a threatening situation. Can you reasonably expect someone to be responsible for that in which he is not trained?

This is particularly true for financial management and commercial operations. Naturally in any solution trust is going to play a major part and trust is easier to engender when related to affective ties.

Allocation of responsibility, selection on the basis of competence and the need for new (often technical) skills in the church give inter-related demands on church decision-making structures and organisational choices. How are the tensions arising from the interactions of such factors as well as those of rural development implementation itself to be reconciled?

c) Conflict resolution

The traditional church systems for recognizing, acknowledging, addressing and resolving conflict stem from theological needs. Doctrine and behaviour in relation to Christian teaching have been the primary areas of the churches' concern.

Can such resolution systems be expected to adequately accommodate and resolve issues of a more technical, material and secular nature? In how far will such systems be able to adopt and hold up objective management demands, judgements on the basis of productivity, efficiency, profitability and the like? Will this all have to be referred to the highest authority - the Bishop or Moderator - which often tends to be a method adopted in Africa, or could and should this be reconciled with the necessary decision-making authority at a lower level?

What is seldom recognised is that conflict and its resolution can be an important building process through increased analysis and awareness. To shy away from conflict (which Christ did not do) as being unchristian reduces the learning and growth possible through grappling with issues. A positive potential is being lost. Accommodation of conflict is a major challenge for churches; for experience has shown that induced development has the tendency to increase rather than resolve conflict - especially when development is viewed as a re-allocation of scarce resources (Anell 1980; Brookfield 1977).
Conflict generation and the necessary resolution are inherent to development yet this is seldom acknowledged and accommodated beforehand.

d) *Imbalance in Resources*

Current donor practices are often such that church development projects can get funds from abroad but normally the church itself cannot. Moreover donor criteria often preclude the church's pastoral side from utilizing development project resources such as vehicles and buildings. The end result is an imbalance between assets and resources of the two sides of the church's organisation - the pastoral and the developmental. That this can and does lead to problems is obvious. Whilst this is the result of trying to marry development to church structures, the donor role can be a major divisive determinant.

Another multi-donor dominated problem is the inequality of resource allocations between projects - leading to a variation of demands on local people which are inexplicable to them. Why is it that in one project, say family planning, everything is free, whilst in another - run by the same church - there are fees and all sorts of charges. Often this is because some donors demand such inputs as signs of motivation and contribution to self-reliance. Yet others, because of their hidden agenda's want to attract people - i.e. reduce the threshold by making some services free.

In my experience donors have too little regard for the inconsistencies (also in conditions of services and resources of project personnel) and the problems this causes for churches at the grassroots level. All-in-all imbalances in resources is a major church development management headache.

e) *Commercialization*

Long-term self-reliance of projects demands that they are in some way income-generating. In other words have a commercial component.

For a variety of reasons churches have shied away from the idea of being or having commercial enterprises within them. Consequently adoption of the prerequisite attitudes and mechanisms to make such enterprises successful is a major problem for existing church structures. Experience has shown that the church cannot combine the two in
any really satisfactory way and rural project management needs to take this into account.

f) Competition

Another problem in church rural development activity is of inter-church competition - especially in "new" areas. Such rivalry can lead churches (as well as others) to adopt practices which are of questionable development morality or efficacy. In the Turkana area of Kenya for example I am aware of competitive church development efforts which are supposedly directed at famine relief based on giving foodstuffs to the congregation who attend. The different churches are referred to by the local people by the foodstuffs which they can get. Thus there is the Sugar Church, the Milk Church, the Posho (Maize meal) Church and so on. Church attendance is thus mostly dictated by what is needed in one's own store or that of one's relatives!

Whilst, for various reasons, a plurality of NGO effort is desirable (Fowler 1982) the effects of traditional religious rivalry take on new and frequently negative aspects once development projects are undertaken. This needs to be guarded against.

g) Development for all

A final problem feature of church-related development is the assurance that such efforts offer access to all rural people rather than just the congregation. This is difficult more for psychological than for practical reasons although the latter do arise. How does one maintain sub-community (congregation) cohesion and motivation whilst allowing every one to benefit from the sub-community efforts.

Christian teaching makes this eminently possible, yet human nature makes it a practical problem. Obviously enough, one result is the competition spoken of earlier.

The foregoing demonstrates some of the unique problems which need to be grappled with when talking of and advising for the management of grassroots development by churches. As if these were not enough, one must really also add the need for the churches to more consciously address the question of whom their development efforts should serve. As Kinyanjui (1983) has argued, the churches development stance and activity so far
has been insufficiently founded on an analysis of the causes of under-development and its differential impact on the various sections of society; the poor; the landless, women and children, farmers, entrepreneurs, artisans, etc. Such an analysis is needed, for its outcome is of relevance to how church development is undertaken and for whom. The churches' strength is its foundation in the people themselves; it is surely this strength that must be built upon rather than simply duplicating the technocratic development being undertaken by so many others.

4. INTEGRATED GRASSROOTS DEVELOPMENT

The move to an "integration" of development activities was basically a response to the experiences of project shortcomings gained during the sixties and early seventies. However, "integration" has tended to be defined in different ways. It has variously meant to contain or to be:

- a coupling of and co-ordination of independent sectoral programmes,
- a multisectoral planning, "blue printing" and implementation exercise,
- all activities undertaken within a specific physical area,
- a method which recognizes rural people to both producers and consumers and thus the incorporation of more instruments to influence them,
- the inclusion of all segments of the population.

On balance "integration" has tended to be the linking of previously discrete sectoral activities (water supplies, education, literacy, health, co-operative developments, agriculture, credits and loans, etc) in a supposedly mutually re-enforcing ways; most frequently within a designated physical area.

Logically, enough an "integrated" approach makes enhanced demands on management. But, as I have tried to argue previously, the necessary prerequisites for successful management along the lines needed and presupposed by such an approach are not really present. And indeed the achievements of an integrated approach have been limited at best (Hyden 1983: 91-94). As well as making the highest demands on one of Africa's most limited resources - management skill - integration has also made people's involvement and participation much more difficult. This is so to the extent that participation is effectively not an input to the programming exercise and is only a nominal component in implementation.
Thus "integration" has really meant little more than that existing, discrete development sectors, recognize the boundary conditions set by other sectors. Integrated Project Scheduling and planning tries to take this into account; once again in a "blue print" fashion. The variety of development timescales (apart from the budgetary) on which each sector works and the variety of externalities to which they are subject (weather, seasons, imports, cash flows, political changes, personnel transfers, etc.) make such sectoral couplings a perilous exercise in which failure is virtually guaranteed. And so it seems, for the emphasis on integration is certainly less than, say, five to ten years ago.

The concentration on multi-sectoralism as the basis for government "integration" efforts has tended to preclude attempts to view integration in alternative ways. Where this has been done it is NGOs who have tried it.

Many such NGO approaches have tried to be human-centred, focusing on human processes as the point of integration.  Taking human-centred processes as the basis of integration has a different logic to that of bureaucratic linking.

It is fundamentally at the human level that all of the arbitrary development sectors created by scientific history and administrative need come together. In terms of human-centred and participatory development it is ultimately only people who truly integrate. Taking such a view and its consequences as the basis of project integration leads to different management structures, activities, needed skills and funding approaches.

It has been argued that such a human integrated approach is impossible for development by government (Korten 1981). It will be up to the NGOs to experiment with and demonstrate the potential of such a basis for integration. NGOs can indeed have advantages with respect to government in terms of motivation of personnel, flexibility, scale of operation, informality, etc. It is by no means therefore a requirement that they also define and practice integration in the same way as government.

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5. The Institute of Cultural Affairs (ICA) offers one example of such an alternative approach.
6. As Tendler (1982) argues however, this does not automatically mean that NGOs necessarily do any better.
The overall point is that the government type multi-sectoralism as a basis of integration suffers, but in intensified fashion, from all of the rural development management problems cited earlier and in addition makes meaningful community participation virtually impossible. The end result is that integration in the way carried out so far may be a retrograde step. Not only does it not "deliver the goods" but for the reasons given above it may be a less cost-effective approach than limited, fragmented, but (partially) more manageable individual sector methods.

Given such a reality NGOs and especially the churches should be in a position to formulate integration in a different way. A way which is not only in keeping with their backgrounds and aims but also incorporates what has been learnt so far. As we shall argue later churches ability to do this will depend not only on themselves but also to a large degree on the sensitivity and learning potential of their donor agencies.

5. A GRASSROOTS DEVELOPMENT SYSTEM

Needless to say the shortcomings of development management, particularly in government programmes, has been the subject of much study - the book by Moris perhaps being one of the most comprehensive in its coverage.

NGOs have also been the subject of critical review (Tendler 1982) but less from a management perspective. This notwithstanding there is, for a variety of reasons, an increased emphasis on development via the non-government sector. This seems almost to be under the motto "less government more development"! The rapid expansion of NGOs during the seventies has however given an opportunity for comparative studies of their methods, successes and failures (Jiggins 1983); for by and large governmental approaches do not manifest so much variety.

One result of such impact studies and comparisons has been the identification of a system of four basic elements required in the initial organisation of rural development. The salient point of these elements is that their foundation and focus are human development processes rather

7. The current trend is for bi-lateral and multi-lateral donors to channel more and more funds to NGOs. The obvious danger is that these "cold" funds will cool-off these otherwise "hot" NGOs (Fowler 1982). Unless care is taken by NGOs when accepting and utilizing cold money the future (5-10 years) disillusionment with their performance can already be predicted.
than technical sector considerations. Such a system answers the two criticisms of rural development management and integration spoken of earlier. Firstly, the system is actually derived from rural development praxis and analysis rather than external models. Secondly, being founded in human (community) processes, it offers a truer integration and participatory possibility than the multi-sectoral approach used so far.

To these four basic elements needs to be added one other in order to form a five-element or 'functional group approach'. This fifth element is an intermediate organisation which stimulates, facilitates, balances and holds together the other four elements in the early phase.

The rest of this paper seeks to review a five-element system and its implications for grassroots rural development management. In addition it takes a first look at the potential of the church as an intermediate organisation and possible more appropriate management features.

5.1 THE FIVE-ELEMENT SYSTEM
(From Roling and de Zeeuw 1983)

"The five element system is so called because the elements, to be described below, each have a crucial role to play if the total system is to function in synergetic fashion. Of course, in each situation the specific mix in which the elements occur or should be selectively strengthened to instal the total system, might vary considerably.

1. The first essential element in the system is mobilisation or conscientization. Rural poor men and women must become aware of their situation, of the kinds of opportunities available to them, of their possibilities to exert leverage to realise those opportunities and of their own efficacy and responsibility. Methods such as literacy training, action research, theatre and so forth have been tried and found effective. Well known is Freire’s pedagogy of the oppressed.

2. A second element is the organisation of rural poor into small, problem-specific homogeneous groups ('functional groups') around some concrete activity which yields rapid and tangible results. Observers agree that the rural poor are seldom ready to organise - and possibly jeopardise existing social networks which provide
security - for vague promises of greater countervailing power. Women often have to overcome special problems such as approval by husbands or male kin, and lack of time. However, observers also agree that experience of success and of effective co-operation lead to an enhanced capacity to make demands on agencies for service and to resist exploitation and extraction. One problem is women's participation in male-dominated local organisations.

3. A third element is training a barefoot cadre accountable to the functional groups, or to their second-tier organisations, which can provide specialised services such as leadership, book keeping, technical assistance and so forth. It is often advisable to train gender-specific cadres. A typical example is the barefoot pump attendant accountable to the water management committee of a small-scale irrigation scheme.

4. A fourth element is technical assistance to provide essential inputs, knowledge and production conditions which the functional groups themselves cannot cater for. That is, technical assistance is necessary to create realistic opportunities for rural poor men and women.

Usually, government agencies play a key role in providing technical assistance, but NGO's can often perform some of its functions.

Interventions often focus exclusively on this fourth element and seek to develop technology, to promote its utilisation, to create marketing channels, to build irrigation facilities, and so forth.

The four elements mentioned above can operate in synergetic fashion, i.e., the whole is more than the sum of the parts. The four elements together form a linkage system.

Field experience shows that four element systems are likely to be unstable. The government agency, for example, might recent the greater demands made upon it by organised small farmers and refuse to serve them. This means that tangible opportunities are not
forthcoming and members lose their interest in participation. Also, functional groups often need much guidance initially to avoid take-overs by local elites, to solve the special problems of women's participation and so forth.

Furthermore, the four elements mentioned so far do not provide for the role of mobilisation, organisation and training at the functional group level. Technical assistance staff of government agencies are not equipped usually to engage in such activities. Furthermore, it seems illogical to expect that government agencies would actively stimulate claim making upon themselves.

5. Consequently, a fifth element is required: an intermediate organisation which maintains the balance between the grassroots functional groups and government agencies (i.e. between the 'network and the apparatus') and which can create new functional groups. A typical example of an intermediate organisation would be an NGO bent on maintaining the linkage system between local community health committees, the barefoot health workers accountable to them and the government primary health care officers who are supposed to train the barefoot health workers and provide them with essential medicines”.

As can be seen, the whole orientation of such an approach is people-centred, the needed technical assistance and inputs being one of the four elements but not the central element as is often the case.

Additionally, such an approach does not and cannot have a 'blue-print project' as its basis - it is essentially a process system. This is of fundamental consequence for many, especially government, donors given their current project-funding orientation. The relative flexibility of NGOs may offer a more viable potential for the implementation of such an approach.

5.2 INTERMEDIATE ORGANISATIONS

There is a debate as to which agency type - governmental, parastatal or NGO - could function as an initiator and stimulator of such a system and its processes. It is beyond the scope of this paper to consider
this debate as the concern is at present limited to NGOs and particularly the church. What is apparent, however, is that the type of agency is less important than its ability to actually function in a participatory manner and maintain its concern for the poor in the face of other pressures and interests (Jiggins 1981: 6).

An intermediate organisation requires certain characteristics if it is to be able to fulfil its role in relation to the four system components cited earlier:

a) It has to have a structural independence and autonomy to enable it to mediate between the various interest groups and other participating bodies.

b) It must be able to command resources external to the community (e.g. micro-fund capital or start-up capital) i.e. it has financial independence and hence leverage or at least lobbying access and skills in relation to government and other resources.

c) It must have personnel, such as group organisers, mobilizers and trainers as well as personnel with economic and technical skills. In other words a mix of skills seldom found within one department or sectoral agency.

d) It must be in a position to hold the balances: checking that one component does not get the overhand at the expense of others. It should be able to give assistance to any which are lagging. In other words a mediating capacity in holding all of the components together during the start up phase, protecting those that are weak as well as linking local organisations or functional groups to other agencies (Jiggins 1981: 3).

The overall emphasis is thus on an intermediate organisation as "supporter" rather than "controller" of community development processes. In summary, then, it can be said that an intermediate organisation needs a participatory sensitivity, organisational independence, own resources, a broad mix of human skills, resilience and a long-term commitment in order to function effectively.

5.3 THE CHURCH AS INTERMEDIATE ORGANISATION

In how far does the church have the potential to function as an intermediate organisation for grassroots development?
We have already seen in part 3 some of the problems encountered by integrating development into existing church structures. However, we must not lose sight of the fact that many of these problems have arisen because the church has not sufficiently analysed what its position and its best contribution to development could be. Rather it has basically adopted, sometimes in an innovative way, the sectoral/material project approach common to government and often required by NGO donors. Has such an adoption capitalized on the churches' unique asset - its foundation in people? Or has it led the church into an area where its skills are weak, thus making it vulnerable by being unable to fulfil the demands made on it; this in turn creating an increasing dependency on external support with a resulting threat to its autonomy?

In how far can the church fulfil the role of an intermediate organization, in other words taking a human process approach to development? Let us try to review the churches position vis a vis the characteristics identified earlier.

Firstly, participatory sensitivity. There is no doubt that the church has a basic, motivated, grassroots structure founded in local populations. This is its strength. However, traditional church structures identifying the Minister as the shepherd to lead and the congregation as sheep to be led does not automatically allow such grassroots structures to function in a truly participatory way. Indeed such a change can be threatening. Such structures can also ascribe development leadership roles to church officers who may not have the prerequisite skills and insights. Thus, whilst the churches human foundations offer an enormous potential for participation, a conscious effort will need to be made to allow this to happen. This should be part of the churches own deliberations on its developmental role and method. Whilst participation is certainly no panacea or an end in itself and can be appropriated by the elite, it is a very necessary component of any self-perpetuating development effort. The church must address this whilst fully realizing the implications for its own functioning-for participation is much more than just decentralized or benevolent decision-making.

8. The Christian development Education Service (CDES) was a catholic related organisation engaged in a process of awareness creation using a psycho-social method. The "absorption" of the central CDES organisation - meaning its dissolution was a response to the increasing discomfort of the clergy with the critical parishioners coming out of the programmes.
Secondly, organisational independence. The degree of independence of churches in Africa varies and is to a large degree historically determined. Here again is a paradox in that the fact that the church is truly embedded in a country and a community means that to a far greater degree, subject to local pressures than secular NGOs who are often extensions of foreign donor agencies. Even though a result of the colonial era, present-day churches are almost fully indigenous not having the expatriate executives normally to be found in secular NGOs.

The churches' extensive linkages to other countries does offer it room to operate and manoeuvre which would perhaps not be tolerated of other organisations and thus an enhanced possibility of maintaining autonomy. Churches are recognized as having their own legitimate place in African Society and its development, but as Kinyanjui says, they have to decide who they wish to serve and how.

Thirdly, own resources. Coupled to the previous point, churches have access to extensive networks of support and finance. As in nearly all development funding, one has to deal with the donor/recipient, patron/client or even parent/child dimensions; which such funding can manifest. In this, churches may be at a disadvantage in comparison to other NGOs especially where the latter are local extension of foreign donors. Churches have historical relationships to deal with which the new NGOs do not have to the same degree. On the other hand, the community's own resources can be mobilized more easily by existing church organisation. The necessary social control mechanisms and adjustments depending on people's capabilities to contribute are already included.

However, an important lesson learnt in rural development is that recurrent finance capability is a more important criteria than per capita capital allocations.

Given present development trends the churches access to development resources are likely to increase - the question is on whose and on what terms. Will additional resources support or control?

Fourthly, a mix of human skills. In order to cater for development the church has had to employ many new types of workers. Slowly churches are creating development departments built up of community
development, technical, financial and other skills. In this they are frequently replicating skills in government departments as well as the administrative structures to deal with increased funds. The management and administrative costs of technical projects; for in general donors are reticent to finance recurrent costs.

The question of in how far the depth and mix of skills should extend to allow complete technical project implementation rather than just to facilitate the leverage on the sectors which should provide the services is difficult to answer. This in turn is related to the level of external financing to the community, i.e. in how far it is seed-money as opposed to major capital works available on a project allocation. Often, therefore, technical skills are hired on a per project or contract basis. Does this offer any really long-term viability or continuity?

The church will need to critically review the mix of skills it needs to stimulate and support community effort and determine in how far its task is to make demands on the organisations which should be providing such skills. The church's own forte' is in the human rather than the technical domain. Should this not be the key area in which the church expands and strengthens its development skills?

Fifthly and finally, resilience and long-term commitment. The church, in comparison with many foreign-based NGOs, cannot be viewed as a transient feature of rural society and its development activity. The vast majority of its workers at all levels, are citizens of the country concerned, often working in their home areas. In terms of truly human development processes which demand time scales of 15-30 years (half to one generation, like government, the church offers a perspective of continuity beyond that of many others.

For the latter, insecurity of funding sources, development fads and fashion, changes of personnel and so on all mitigate against their resilience and really long-term involvement no matter how committed the individuals are. Eventually sustained development must come from the rest of the African people themselves, their own organisations, aims and capabilities. Indigenizing new foreign NGO organisations will not be enough. In this, the African church has a hundred year start.
In summary one can say that the church has the fundamental base, advantages and potential to fulfil the role of an intermediate organisation if it chooses to do so. But it is clear that such a choice will have implications for the church itself as well as for improving the praxis of rural development.

6. THE MANAGEMENT OF GRASSROOTS DEVELOPMENT BASED ON 'FUNCTIONAL-GROUP' SYSTEM

Jon Moris offers in his book (1981: 16-125) many useful, pragmatic tips for improving development management practices. His advice, suggestions and guidelines are directed primarily at government development agencies, both donors and recipients. Whilst arguing strongly against a project and blueprint basis for development, of necessity many of his suggestions are aimed at improving the project-based methods utilized so far. For the reality is that there is little prospect of a shift away from such an approach by government development organisations. Thus such suggestions are also relevant to NGOs who function along project lines.

This means that Moris has not taken a human-process approach to development and the management demands that this makes. Therefore this final section tries to take a first look at some management aspects of utilizing the five-element system. In addition a first tentative step will be made in suggesting three features of rural Africa and its peoples which may be pointers for more appropriate management approaches. These are community rather than individual or institution, dialogue rather than paperwork and respect for age rather than organisational status. It is recognized that this is but a first step on a path and much more discussion, review and research is needed of relevant experiences and case studies.

6.1 Towards "Functional-Group" Grassroots Management in Africa

a. Planning

Development planning as practiced at the moment is a formulation of objectives and a time scheduling of activities and resources based on days, months, years, decades and so on. In an African

9. For an interesting example of African community vs Western individual and institution see Donovan 1978.
grassroots system a more appropriate approach would be to base one's plan on the times between community dialogue. ICA for example call these moments of the community coming together "consults". The (ir)regularity of meetings, given the seasonal nature of rural life, would not be strictly weekly, monthly or the like. Dialogues or community consultations are an acknowledged feature of African social organisation systems, and include an accepted authority of participants. The fact, for example, that now in Kenya land cases are handled by elders is a recognition of the value of the authority still vested in traditionally ascribed roles. Face to face in the here and now is a fundamental mode to human interaction in Africa.

An appropriate management approach should have this foundation. Plans thus are formulated by the community, time scales are open ended i.e. there is no end-point in terms of community development although this might be true for activities undertaken. Activities, and achievements form the basis of plans rather than calendar years; time cannot really be commoditized in unpredictable environments.

For the interveners and facilitators of community development the four elements could be set out as activity groups and their relative progress charted. This will re-enforce and highlight the inter-relatedness of the system. In addition, this can strengthen the community's awareness that they are the centre of, rather than peripheral to, development. Some community mobilization models and methods for doing this do exist (Jiggins 1981). There is of course no reason why such parallel activities cannot be shown in the well-known project bar chart form. Such planning tools are useful but the users must be careful that the tools do not dictate but remain a visualization and representation of interrelated processes all undergoing different influences and dynamics.

The creation of tools for assisting in the visualization and representation of human development management activities will be one much needed way of giving form to what is still an emerging discipline (Moris 1981: 128).

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10. For example to draw bar charts on strips of elastic paper!??
Nudging

Almost as a matter of practice traditional project planning does not explicitly or implicitly include activities needed to create and maintain the necessary political constellation which development activities need if they are to succeed. At most, formal letters of approval or no objection are requested from the relevant Ministries. However, at the grassroots level such formalizations are of little use, it is local political and power relationships which are one determinant for progress.

Rondinelli (1983: 96) is at pains to point out that in government development projects functional autonomy and segregation are a prerequisite of any new type of intervention if it is to have any hope of success. Politization is the rule not the exception and must be taken into account.

Therefore it is necessary to recognize that a degree of "nudging" is necessary. By "nudging" are meant the activities needed to create and maintain a suitable political environment for progress without compromising on the community's decisions. The ways to nudge are varied - both obtuse and subtle and are worthy of further study. Rural communities are normally very aware of local political strengths realities and interests.

In my experience "nudging" activities take up a significant proportion of a project managers or facilitators time.

Nudging is a necessary part of rural development and this needs to be recognized.

c. Implementation

Many of Moris's suggestions apply here at the practical level.

The important point is that the context of such suggestions shifts when human and community change is the foundation. It requires a different "mid-set" i.e. a different way of looking at what one is doing and what is trying to be achieved. This is important because it automatically requires that one takes into account the
complex of factors (social, political, technical, administrative, environmental, etc) which influence progress. Coupling these back to the community is an important implementation requirement. If this is not done responsiveness diminishes, as does real participation, people's motivation and the necessary learning which is a needed part of human change. In more technical terms the cornerstone of implementation is continual "feedback" via dialogue. This must be built-in rather than just be hoped that it will happen.

d. Administration

Administration (correspondence, financial control, staff employment etc) should be made as close to the community as possible. It is they who should decide if they wish others to do it for them - for example the intermediate organisation. It is the community to whom workers should be accountable - not just on paper but in practice. Again it needs to be realized that administrative performance is a result of complex trade-offs and influences - it does not take place in a neutral clinical environment. As always, control mechanisms are needed to avoid "seepage" of resources but these must be related to the rural situation and capabilities of the basic cadre.

e. Resources

The primary resources needed in such a rural development system are related to community mobilization, organisation and training. These are human manpower resources who are not, in themselves, income-generating. Ideally at least part, if not all, of their cost should be borne by the community.

Subsequent resources needs will be determined by the community themselves and this cannot be predicted at the start of a process of community development. It is important however to take care that the social resource demands do not expand faster than the productive base which is needed to sustain them.
Many NGOs have entered rural development with a specific technical (water, health, education, etc) or social (children, disabled, women) mandate. Some, but only a few, have as their raison d'être the mobilization of communities for their own self-development.

The church has entered the development stage in a different way and yet has tended to adopt the project development approaches of others as have many of the donor agencies which support them.

A major conclusion which has been drawn from twenty years of rural development practice is that, the project basis of fund-giving and usage does not correspond to rural development reality; its main function is to facilitate the bureaucratization of the development business.

This method is so ingrained that there are enormous resistances to change. Yet the mismatch between the method utilized and actual rural development practice is so large that it is not only causing a wastage of resources but is leading to increasing rather than decreasing dependency of African countries.

The church is in a position and has a Christian and historical mandate to change at least its own practices by concentrating on what it is good at - motivating and mobilizing people. Naturally, it will need to convince its supporters that this is its important role in grassroots rural development (as well as other activities). It will require more open-ended funding, allocation of more resources to "community workers" or "group organizers" and concentration on development of skills in these areas.

Donor agencies will need to look anew at their funding practices seeking more nuanced and open approaches and accepting that financing community development mobilization and support is in the long-run the fundamental contribution to self-perpetuating development.

Much of this is not new but we cannot carry-on ignoring the huge gap between development theory, method and achievement.
The immediate task is to learn more from, to listen more to, the majority actors on the development stage-rural people. To try to recognize and value what is actually rather than should be happening and seeing what it tells us in management terms. To start an active search and research into appropriate grassroots management for African rural development.
REFERENCES


