MANAGEMENT AT GRASSROOTS LEVEL FOR INTEGRATED

RURAL DEVELOPMENT IN AFRICA WITH

SPECIAL REFERENCE TO CHURCHES

By

Alan F. Fowler

WORKING PAPER NO. 419

INSTITUTE FOR DEVELOPMENT STUDIES

UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI

P.O. Box 30197

NAIROBI, KENYA

December 1984

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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 envi-
ronment. 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.

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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 grass-roots 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 grass-
roots development in Africa. There are three main premises underlying
this questioning, one is specifically in relation to the Church's involve-
ment in rural development.

The first premise is that to date the induced development manage-
ment 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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1.   The book by Jon Moris (1981) is required reading by anyone
involved in African development management.

* This is a revised version of a paper presented at a Regional Workshop on
Integrated Rural Development of the Anglican Diocese of Maseno South,
Kisumu. 5th - 11th March 1984.

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.[2] 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).[3] 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 indigeneous 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.

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2.   A conference of Development Choices for the 80's and beyond is but one example. See International Development Review, Volume XXII 1980/2 + 3.

3.   The estimated number of NGOs in OECD countries is over 400 with a 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 manage-
ment problems. The adoption of a "predictive" basis to management in
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 AfricaWestern styles, approaches and methods
is of course not restricted to management only. But in terms of how develop-
ment 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 organis-
ation.

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 con-
straints 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 con-
tribute to the basic rural insecurity of life and of physical and social re-
production. (Chambers, Longhurst and Pacey, 1981). The environment in
Africa is far from controlled or controlable.

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 begin-
ning to become decisive in shaping social organisations".

Such an economy permeates, influences and gives resilience to the
social economy (Hyden 1983: 8-16; Chambers 1983: 111) and is of direct
consequence for the possibility of operating a scientific/objective manage-
ment 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-organis-
ational factors are permitted and indeed expected to influence both deci-
sions and behaviour. This is a logical consequences, 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 politiciz-
ation of organisational functioning do not provide the prerequisites for
a successful application of many Western managment 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 manager. 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 grass-roots development in Africa.

3. 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 monolythic 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 before hand.

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. More-over 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 develop-mental. 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 inconsisten-cies (also in conditions of services and resources of project per-sonnel) and the problems this causes for churches at the grassroots level. All-in-all imbalances in resources is a major church develop-ment 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 struc-tures. 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 psychologi-
cal than for practical reasons although the latter do arise. How
does one maintain sub-community (congregation) cohesion and motiv-
ation whilst allowing every one to benefit from the sub-community
efforts.

Christian teaching makes this eminently possible, yet human nature
makes it's 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 develop-
ment 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 budgettary) on which each sector works and the variety of externalities to which they are subject (weather, seasons, imports, cash cflows, 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, focussing on human processes as the point of integration.[5] Taking human-centred processes as the basis of integration has a different logic to that of beaurocratic 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).[6] 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 doesnot 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 form a management perspective. This notwithstanding there is, for a variety of reasons, an increased emphasis on development via the non-government sector.[7] 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

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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 parti-
cipatory 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 eseldom 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-oper-
ation 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 orga-
nisations.

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 tech-
    nical assistance, but NGO's can often perform some of its func-
    tions.

    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 particip-
ation. 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 govern-
ment 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 grassroot
    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 govern-
ment, 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 parti-
cularly 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 person 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 compo-
    nents 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 pro-
cesses. In summary, then, it can be asaid that an intermediate organ-
isation 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 inter-
mediate 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 organiz-
ation, in other words taking a human process approach to development?
Let us try to review the churches position vis a vis the characteris-
tics 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.[8] 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 appropriatedd 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.

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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 thee
clergy with the critical parishoners coming out of the programmes.

Secondly, <u>organisational independence</u>. The degree of independence of
churches in Africa varies and is to a large degree historically deter-
mined. Here again is a paradox in that the fact that the church is
truly embedded in a country and a community means that is 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, <u>own resources</u>. 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 organis-
ation. The necessary social control mechanisms and adjustments depend-
ing on people's capabilities to contribute are already included.

However, an important lesson learnt in rural development is that re-
current 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, <u>a mix of human skills</u>. 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 communit

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 organ-
isation 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, prag-
matic tips for improving development management practices. His advice,
suggestions and guidelines are directed primarily at government develop-
ment 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,[9] 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 indivi-
dual and institution see Donovan 1978.

grassroots system a more appropriate approach would be to base
ones 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 acknow-
ledgedfeature 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 develop-
ment 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 un-
predictable environments.

For the intervenors and facilitators of community development
the four elements could be set out as activity groups and their
relative progress chartered. 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 vizualization and repre-
sentation 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[10] 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!!!

b. 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 constallation
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: 98) 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 exeption
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 comprimising 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, administra-
tive, 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 employ-
ment 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.

6.2 Implications

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'etre 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 year 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 beaurocratization 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 grass-
roots rural development (as well as other activities). It will
require more open-ended funding, allocation of more resources to
"community workers" or "group organisers" and concentration on develop-
ment 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 financ-
ing 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.

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