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**A SEARCH OF SUB-NATIONAL LEVEL PARTICIPATORY TOOLS FOR SUSTAINABLE  
MANAGEMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL AND NATURAL RESOURCES POLICIES  
AND PROGRAMS**

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**INTRODUCTION**

**Problem Statement**

Most Sub-Saharan African countries, either pursuing a neo-classical economic model, or a centralized command type, model are characterized by a top-down environmental planning approach. In spite of divergent policies, programs and legislations guiding the two camps' development endeavors, many African state institutions are faced with a host of development constraints including lack financial and manpower of resources, technology and structural problems (Seidman and Anang 1992). It is, in part, due to these predicaments that the formulated policies and programs, whether drawn in-country or foreign designed (Washington, London or Paris) have failed to adequately address the root causes of/and the cures for the socio-economic and ecological crisis. More important, however, is the fact that development policies and programs have not been informed by local realities or the people who must live with these policies on daily basis. Consequently, the programs suffer from either partial implementation or total failure, leading, in turn, to the perpetuation of underdevelopment as predominantly characterized by environmental degradation, poverty, famine, and human misery (Rugumamu and Kishimba 1993).

One way out of this ecological and socio-economic depression has been for African governments to opt for political and economic reforms tailored around the international donors' (the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, United Nations agencies) perceptions of the causes of and solutions for Africa's underdevelopment. For many African states, the end of the Cold War has ushered in a serious decline in foreign investment- investment that was formerly available "unconditionally". Since the mid-nineteen eighties, Africa has been on the move to political and economic liberalization as a strategy towards sustainable development.

It has since become increasingly evident that wider participation by African stakeholders in policy and program debates will guarantee African governments' commitment to reform and sustainance in the search for sustainable development (Participatory Rural Appraisal 1991; Brown 1993; Biodiversity Program 1993; Brinkerhoff and Kulibaba 1994). It is necessary for Africans to have broad popular access to their own economies and governmental decision-making processes to ensure their demarginilization. There is, therefore, need for designing participatory strategies and tools for enhancing sustainable economic growth and environmental

sustainability through democratic participation in the natural resources planning cycle (Weber 1991).

This paper focuses on the search for participatory strategies and tools for sub-national level coordinated decision-making for National Environmental Action Plans (NEAPs). It seeks to underscore local level participation in strategic planning for combating environmental degradation and promoting economic growth and improving the peoples's quality of life.

The environmental and natural resources base, which include land, water, air, minerals, energy, soils, flora, fauna and the human beings who use them, tends to behave as natural systems. Given these resources significant cultural, socio-economic, ecological and scientific role as the present and future sources of livelihoods of the majority of the African population, foreign exchange earner, supporter of political stability and biodiversity, their policy and program review calls for urgent attention (Biodiversity Support Program 1993; Rugumamu 1993). Furthermore the international community's concern about these resources, as reflected by the 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) and the 1994 International Conference on Population and Development points to the ever-escalating global demand for food, fibre, energy and healthy environment.

Within the African resource use system, there is a subtle boundary between private and common resources. At the local, and lowest level, the village ecosystem is a continuum composed of a complex of land users - land - water - crop - livestock -pasture - forest - game ... system (Matlock 1981; Agarwal and Marain 1992). Unless traditional institutions and values break down, as has happened in some African countries (Rugumamu 1993), Hardin's (1968) tragedy of the commons, that is, resource degradation, does not occur (Ciriacy-Wantrup and Bishop 1975; Little 1987).

At the other end of the spectrum of environmental degradation factors, is the political instability in many countries in Sub-Saharan Africa. Lack of good governance has created ethnic and racial crisis and general lawlessness resulting in an abundance of political refugees. As a consequence, the environmental and natural resource base at refugee destination sites are characterized by devegetation, soil erosion, pollution and famine. This pathetic situation highlights the difficulty of enlisting accountability of the resource users in planning local level sustainable development. Under these circumstances, it is critical that environmental management problems be tackled at the international level by taking advantage of existing institutional and financial resources (Michael Brown of PVOs/NGOs Washington, DC. and John Gaudet of USAID pers. com.).

In order for this sector to sustain and/or enhance sustainable socio-economic and ecological development, there is a need to

address the twin strategic objectives of ensuring (i) a sustained and/or enhanced productivity of ecosystems; and (ii) provide enabling environment for genuine democratic participation and interaction (horizontally and vertically coordinated) of key stakeholders in the planning process.

The design of a pragmatic policy and program to deal with these dual objectives should be modeled around the material conditions necessary for their "reproduction". Central to these proposals is the condition that the sub-national level stakeholders are an integral part of the reform process. As this transformation calls for a change in behavior, values and attitudes formerly held by stakeholders with respect to resources, the need for a cautious step in this direction cannot be overemphasized (Field 1991). The reform process should therefore be pegged, among other things, on the stakeholders' perceptions and accumulated knowledge and experience on managing the environmental and natural resources base.

In introducing new ideas and practices, it is deemed important that people see them as meeting their needs. If felt needs do not exist, needs must first be generated by a consciously planned action. The deep-rooted beliefs in the infallibility of modern scientific knowledge prevents technical experts and decision-makers from seeing the potential use of local knowledge (Peatti 1968). People are indeed a source of much useful knowledge for development (Fujisaska 1989a and b).

For a pragmatic policy researcher, it is imperative to search for participatory planning strategies and tools that go beyond sheer data collection and more to a participatory learning environment (Karyarya et.al. 1988). The data and information on natural resources utilization and environmental quality, gathered and based on stakeholders' perspectives, may be used to generate trade-offs to achieve immediate and long-term sub-national, national and a "global village" goals of sustainable development and environmental health without compromising the welfare of future generations (Brutland, 1986).

There is, therefore, the need for accessing democratic participatory tools to put in place a foundation whereby all concerned stakeholders in environmental and natural resources development, both at sub-national and national levels, play an important part. This study propagates an institutional change/transformation approach as a basis for sub-national level participatory formulation, implementation and monitoring and evaluation of environmental and natural resources management policies and programs. This approach is mandatory because of the perception that the present institutions' transformative capacity will not produce change. (Binkerhoff and Kulibaba 1994). The task ahead is to make the current economic and political liberalization more participatory and inclusive so as to reach the majority of the

African society that is highly dependent on natural resources for survival.

### **Objectives**

The thrust of this study is to review African experiences indicative of "success" stories of participatory planning for environmental and natural resources management policies and programs, with special focus on sub-national levels.

The long term objectives are three-fold:

(i) To design sub-national level democratic participatory tools capable of capturing data and information from the stakeholders which is necessary for planning sustainable environmental and natural resources development.

(ii) To identify the levels in the power structures in place as well as the organizational units at which pressure/persuasion can be applied, to induce the sought changes.

(iii) To create an enabling environment for a democratic participatory planning process to succeed.

### **Hypotheses**

The four hypotheses guiding this research agenda are:

(i) Participatory tools have a potential for enhancing and sustaining sub-national level management of natural resources policies and programs.

(ii) Sub-national level institutions in place do not have the capacity to manage natural resources policies and programs.

(iii) Sub-national level institutions have not been involved in formulating contemporary natural resources policies and programs.

(iv) Current natural resources policies and programs are neither people-centered, environment friendly nor resources productivity sustaining.

### **Research Questions**

The principal research questions directing the study are broadly formulated as follows:

(i) What participatory strategies and methodologies, and at what levels, are suitable for natural resources data and information gathering for planning sustainable natural resources development?

(ii) What policies, legislation and by-laws are in place to govern natural resources management?

(iii) What local and foreign individuals, groups, institutions (formal and informal) are involved in the process of planning natural resources and environmental management and conservation?

(iv) What opportunities for success in the reform process do these institutions have?

(v) What capacity do they have to undertake the pertinent roles and responsibilities in the process?

(vi) Whose interests do these institutions serve?

(vii) What values and attitudes are held by these institutions?

(viii) What data and information is fed into policy and program formulation?

(ix) What communication avenues exist between the institutions, policy-makers and enforcers?

(x) What are the conversion processes that set limits on how the policy makers consider feedbacks as a basis for setting new policies and programs?

### **Methodology**

Guided by the hypotheses and the research questions, the study sets out to collect evidence regarding the range of tools used in genuine participatory planning approaches that seek to enhance sustainable development. The research, a learning process, benefits greatly from discussions, interviews, seminars and other forms of congenial interactions with U.S. scientists conducted during the three-month study period. This data source was complemented by accessed literature reviews in the U.S based institutions involved in Africa's policy reform efforts.

By the very nature of some research questions the need for field-work cannot be overemphasized.

## **PARTICIPATORY PLANNING PROCESSES FOR SUSTAINABLE ENVIRONMENTAL AND NATURAL RESOURCES DEVELOPMENT**

### **The Debate on Participation in Sub-Saharan Africa**

There is a heated debate on the concept of participation in development circles and the phrase has now been a "catch word" among development researchers and politicians (Leighton 1986; Carruthers and Chambers 1981; Conyers 1986). Like many concepts in the development arena, the term "participation" has met with what Cohen and Uphoff referred to as "popularity without clarity"- - as individuals use it as a means to meet their own ends (Brinkerhoff and Kulibaba 1994).

Due to the complexity of the debate, this paper adapts the position that the United States Agency for International Development's (U.S.A.I.D) took in 1994. USAID describes "participation" as both the ends and the means - both the sustainable results we seek and the way that the providers and recipients of development assistance, must nurture and cherish those results. It is further advanced that development by participation:

- (i) broadens access to economic opportunities;
- (ii) empowers local peoples - especially those from marginalized groups - to engage in their society's decision making processes; and
- (iii) increases the capacity of the society as a whole and improves the quality of life of its people and environment. (emphasis mine)

Furthermore, it is argued by USAID that development assistance approaches are considered participatory when:

- (i) they respond and contribute to efforts that people in the host society are already attempting to carry out;
- (ii) they are consistent with the priorities and values of those on whom their sustainability and replicability will depend, as determined through broad consultation and demonstrated local willingness to share risks;
- (iii) they provide greater information, voice, and influence to the poor and disadvantaged;
- (iv) they strengthen the capacity of institutions throughout the society to address people's needs and priorities through effective, equitable and sustainable development policies and programs;
- (v) they replace relationships of dependence and domination with partnership and mutual accountability marked by open information, the use of joint assessments, collaboration, and negotiation; and
- (vi) they unleash innovation and initiative at individual,

local, and national levels.

It is contended here that if the analysis starts from qualified and conditional premises, then participatory strategies can be developed. These policies should concentrate efforts on effective means of popular participation on services for which participation is likely to have the most positive impact. Policies should also focus on all the role occupants for whom participation is most useful (Leighton 1986). People-centred development policies have indeed, a socio-cultural dimension, one which is very critical to success, particularly in traditional societies. They have the potential to broaden the base of the role occupants and instil a sense of responsibility and accountability at all levels. Therefore, one valid lesson learned is that, as change in behavior is contemplated, human development policies and programs must take socio-cultural concerns into account, instead of ignoring them as in the past.

In real life experience, two principles guide participatory planning- institutional and structural levels notwithstanding. First, the extent of participation of stakeholders (in their spectrum) varies according to the planning processes' requirements of specific policy and program types (Leighton 1986). Second, the degree of empowerment of stakeholders accounts for the "punch" necessary to convert economic and related demands into effective political realities, a precondition for popular policy reform. The proceeding discussion highlights the extent to which the two principles guide participatory planning in Africa.

#### **Processes In Participatory Policy and Program Planning**

This subsection examines some of the literature available within the USAID community and the multinational agencies on the development of participatory planning in environmental and natural resources management in Sub-Saharan Africa. The evolution is investigated within the context of a spectrum of processes, actors and actions, and borrows heavily from Brinkerhoff and Kulibaba's (1994) comprehensive review of literature on "Participation in Economic Reform in Africa". The approach provides a framework for assessing participation as an ends/means to sustainable development. The intriguing questions are: who participates in and how does participation occur; and what organizational unit is best suited regarding policy and program planning. Planning is broadly conceived as constituting three major interactive processes (with a variety of feedback loops among, and within, refinements) including design, implementation and monitoring and critical evaluation.

As far as the issue of who participates is concerned, we seek answers for the following specific questions as the base-line data on the state-of-the-art participatory policy and program reform.

- (i) who participates in the planning processes?

- (ii) what is their participation capacity?
- (iii) whose interests do they serve?
- (iv) what values and attitudes do they hold?
- (v) what is their input?

With respect to how participatory planning takes place, we seek to answer the following research questions that address the issues of policy and program sustainability:

- (i) what participatory strategies, tools and mechanisms are in place?
- (ii) what is the degree of empowerment of participants?
- (iii) what is the source of initiative ?
- (iv) what are the incentives for participation; whether voluntary, induced or coerced?
- (v) what are the conversion processes that set limits on how participants (especially the state) consider feedback as a basis for setting policy and program reform?

**The Policy and Program Design Process:** The design process for policies and programs constitutes a number of key operations including analysis, design and adoption.

As for who participates in these operations, development researchers point to the top-down planning approach employed by most African governments. This strategy is devoid of contribution from the general public and members of the private and popular sectors as planned. As a result, government bureaucrats tend to monopolize these functions.

Recent studies document signs of reluctance within the civil society in embracing policy reforms drawn by some African governments and national bureaucrats because the reforms are seen as having been dictated by "personal" interests (Brinkerhoff and Kulibaba 1994). It is observed that most African governments, given their characteristic ethnic, religious, political and economic coalitions, rarely implement policy changes that are contrary to the the short-term interests of their major supporters- as this action would, most likely, jeopardize the tenure of the regime. More importantly, even amongst bureaucrats, noting that their own interests are threatened by policy reforms, tend to act in ways that sabotage reform processes. This is exemplified in a study by Bratton and van de Walle that examines fifteen African countries and finds that, out of the fifteen, nine have behaved like so (Binkerhoff and Kulibaba 1994).

A number of potentially key institutions at the national level, whose involvement in the policy and program reform cycle would contribute to genuine democratic participation, have been proposed by, among others, USAID (1994), Swartzendruber and Njovens (1993), Binkerhoff and Kulibaba (1994). The philosophical underpinning of

choosing participants, whether at the national or sub-national level, should revolve along a continuum of existing and potential public/private institutions that have been, or are likely to be affected by the reform process (Carrol 1992).

The first, and foremost activity in policy and program formulation is an analysis of the current situation. The analysis, a key to understanding the flaws that are built-into existing policies and programs, has been the domain of state bureaucrats. Brinkerhoff and Kulibaba (1994) provide evidence that some African government bureaucrats have demonstrated limited conservatism in policy reform negotiations with the World Bank and other donors. It is reported that most African government policies were tuned to keep particular regimes in power. Any independent analysis contrary to this view was considered opposition to the government and was quickly suppressed in the name of "national unity". Furthermore, as a survival strategy, these African political elites sought to monopolize development efforts. On a larger scale, this state of affairs filters down to sub-national levels. These lower levels are characterized by limited popular power devolution, where compartmentalization of ministry personnel almost always hinders community group input in these cases, development is sectoral, and not holistically approached as necessary. This approach has deprived local peoples of ownership of development initiatives.

In view of the limited quality of the analysis operation, and limited room for African participants' alternative perspectives, Africa's participatory experience exhibits the weak design of donor dominated stabilization and structural adjustment policy packages. The African participants' perspective to this scenario has thus been described as a donor predesigned "one-size-fits-all" reform package (Brinkerhoff and Kulibaba 1994). As a result, the policy dialogue has, in some countries, completely failed to address the key inputs in the reform content and the reform performance criteria leading to reform shifts.

As if that was not enough, these studies reveal that the program/policy design process is the exclusive domain of a narrow circle of actors who have priveleged access to national decision-makers (Brinkerhoff and Kulibaba 1994). Local African governments are reported to have played either a non-existent or highly limited role in their own policy and program designs. By and large, wherever consultations were made, they followed the "natural law", stating that lack of knowledge, finance or trained personnel reinforces the creation of a top down policy plan. Being closest to the grassroots level, however, local government institutions have a great potential to undertake informed and successful policy analysis.

There are also many cases studies that describe limited non-state institution participating in policy design (Swartzendruber and Njovens 1993; Brinkerhoff and Kulibaba 1994). Of late democratic

states, such as Mali, are reported to be involving NGOs as officially recognized entities in policy discussion. Elsewhere in Africa - Tanzania, South Africa, Uganda- these institutions have contributed to various policy reform issues although at the consultation level. The most intriguing question involves the mechanisms to process emerging alternative policy scenarios into policy and program guidelines.

As for the adoption operation, Brinkerhoff and Kulibaba (1994) report that relevant governments employ such "participatory" mechanisms as information dissemination through the media, use of national conferences and other organized fora and informal consultations with affected institutions, groups and or individuals. Government campaigns revolve around the explanation of particular program rationales objectives and benefits. It should be noted, however that this is the only operation in this critical process where all stakeholders "officially" participate. Though a positive step towards sustainability of policies and programs, participation at this stage may serve as a "rubber stamp" aimed at hypocritically authenticating command planning.

In practice, policies and programs so created are subsequently passed over to the state institutions for enforcement and to the affected masses for implementation. The bottom line in this process should be to reach out to stakeholders including the civil society and the private sector.

**The Policy and Program Implementation Process:** The actors in the policy and program implementation process may be broadly classified into three categories: the enforcing state institutions; the affected constituencies or beneficiaries as individuals or the private sector; and the so- called developmental NGOs of Carrol (1992).

In their comprehensive review of literature, Brinkerhoff and Kulibaba (1994) report an abundance of case studies revealing weaknesses in the institutional capacity of this state-agent dominated process. This domination, it is argued, explains the poor performance of most African economies. A critical issue to this process is the question of the required institutional inter-organizational horizontal and vertical networks which have also been reported as either weak or nonexistent. It is generally acknowledged that most state implementing agents, at best, behave as captives of vested interests driven by the desire to maintain elite control over public resources for rent-seeking and patronage purposes.

By the very nature of the process, the implementation phase also involves a wide spectrum of civil groups - both formal and informal, rural and urban based, who are the affected and or voluntary constituencies. Although African governments prefer the unparalleled role in development leadership they tend to give in to

service delivery NGOs at the grassroots level (Bratton 1989). This tends to reduce the state's weighty managerial and fiscal burden of providing public services on a nation-wide basis.

There is ample evidence in these studies that individuals, NGOs and CBOs have more capacity to influence policy implementation than policy formulation (Bratton 1989). Two types of participation broadly defined on the basis of support or otherwise, have been identified- namely voice and exit. Voice participation refers to mass activities including, on the formal side, such actions as public fora and, on the informal side such actions as rumor mongering. The recent proliferation of media outlets especially the press in the wake of political liberalization in Africa has created a conducive participatory environment for initiating economic and political reform debate.

It is becoming increasingly common that in a suppressed civil society, stakeholders devise their own subtle yet highly effective means of exerting influence on demand for policy reform without drawing down on themselves the wrath of the authorities. This type of participation is referred to as "exit" and alludes to such measures as individuals withholding support, retreating into the informal sector, evasion of policy provision through bribery and even migration, thus creating "economic/political refugees". Evidence from East and Southern Africa, however, show that, under popular support, many local governments have operational capacity and have successfully participated in policy and program implementation.

The NGO community in Africa, operating as a citizenly building block and bridge between governments and donors, on the one hand, and donors and grassroots organizations, on the other, has been commended as an active force in program implementation in natural resources and environment policy development (Swartzendruber and Njovens 1993). It has, in this sector, a demonstrable contribution in the building of local capacity and self-reliance and, hence, project effectiveness - the so-called stereotype activities.

Success in reform efforts would greatly depend upon the patterns of coalition-building between state implementing agents and the key stakeholders willing and able to support policy reform. The approach is capable of avoiding the potential role of the exit group to derail long-term policies and programs characteristic of such key sectors as natural resources management.

**The Policy and Program Monitoring and Evaluation Process:** In the policy and program life-cycle of the monitoring operation, a more frequent activity as compared to the evaluation process, indicates areas necessary for making immediate and specific adaptations as implementation action progresses. This process is, thus, the engine that drives policy and program sustainably.

This monitoring process also constitutes two types of participating actors: the state agents and the foreigners (Brinkerhoff and Kulibaba 1994). As in the preceding processes, monitoring and evaluation, whenever conducted, falls predominantly within the domain of the state bureaucrats. It was optimistically concluded by the 1989 World Bank seminar, however, that, despite administrative bottlenecks, local governments, if sufficiently empowered, offer the potential to help mitigate the negative effects of structural adjustment policies by helping to fine-tune resource allocation and monitoring impacts on the target groups- especially the poor.

The available studies examining the participation of donor technical staff, target groups, local governments and national bureaucrats, calls for the strengthening of evaluation capacity for the latter three groups. Evaluation is critical for managing the technical aspects of market-oriented reforms and for contributing to making the government more politically accountable and examinable.

From the African view-point, it is noted that political and personal survival, are of primordial interest in policy monitoring and evaluation. Institutional mechanisms for participatory monitoring process observed in some countries include the media, local NGOs, national universities and research centers.

### **Towards Participatory Planning Processes**

As outlined above, the planning processes in Africa's natural resources sector should involve all planners - state bureaucrats, donor communities, and members of the private and popular sectors. Efforts to integrate the two groups are sine quanon to sustainable development (Biodiversity Support Program, 1993). To this end, stakeholders at the sub-national level should be allowed to direct the planning process within their area of jurisdiction. This is, indeed, the only way for local level development to succeed.

The private sector, has not been featured in any phase of the policy and program planning cycle (although it does make a discimal contribution in socio-economic and ecological development). Within the African context, two types of the private sector are distinguished: the formal and informal sectors. Whereas the former constitutes a small number of predominantly male bussiness sector often with links to European and North American firms, the latter is made up of a large number of small traders and operators or producers who are often rural, agricultural-based and increasingly youth dominated urban-based, with a significant number of women participants.

Many African governments have deliberately relegated the private sector to virtual oblivion, given their mistrust of both the people and the profit motive it embraces. It may also be hypothesized that

the economic growth of a business community poses a power threat to the first generation of state elites. In these circumstances, most members of the business community are politically and economically suppressed- thus relying on to state elites for protection and privileged support rather than participating in policy reform to champion their cause.

However, efforts are underway in West Africa, for example, where USAID is supporting the creation of national and regional networks of private entrepreneurs to engage in effective policy dialogue with governments and donor agencies with the intent to influence policy and program formulation (Brinkerhoff and Kulibaba 1994). Examples in the informal private sector are also cited, whereby USAID and the World Bank have supported operators in the livestock sector to influence the governments in the region to lower regulatory and operational restrictions in the sub-regional trade. It is also reported that, by and large, the supply response of the informal sector to policy changes in their respective sphere has been more positive than that in the formal operators' sphere.

Furthermore, local government institutions whose activities impact on the grassroots level are seldom cited as policy and program reform actors. Quoting Olowu and Smoke, Brinkerhoff and Kulibaba (1994) note that these institutions' capacity to participate in any operation in the reform process is severely circumscribed by, among other factors, stifling and inefficient bureaucratic control over and extensive political interference in local authority operations by the central government. Worse still, due to local officials' lack of knowledge of the laws defining their powers and duties, their effectiveness as agents of change are severely hampered.

Like local governments, development oriented grassroots NGO activities have a direct impact on the livelihoods of the population in which they are situated (Clark 1991; Carrol 1992; Swartzendruber and Njovens 1993). Their full potential for effective involvement in policy reform in Africa, however, is yet to be realized in terms of factors that enable or constrain success in natural resources management activities (Otto 1993; World Resources Institute 1994). There is currently a mushrooming of indigenous NGOs and informal civil organizations on the African continent which, though still somewhat weak and fragmented, promise an alternative development perspective through participative planning (Dorm-Adzobu et. al. 1991; Otto 1993; Tripp 1994). There is now a window of opportunity for democratic reform given a recent shift in the donor community to fund programs that involve NGOs, that has dramatically empowered NGOs and thus strengthening their bargaining power with governments in the reform process (USAID 1993; Brinkerhoff and Kulibaba 1994).

For the civil society in general, experience reveals that most African governments have behaved as if they knew all of the people's problems and opportunities all of the time (Rugumamu

forthcoming). The situation tends to be complicated when states tend to create civil organizations through affiliations, the so-called Government Non-Governmental Organizations (GONGOs)- thereby "hijacking" the very essence of freedom of associations. This state of affairs is further aggravated by deep-rooted beliefs in the infallibility of modern scientific knowledge that prevents technical experts and decision-makers from seeing the potential use of local knowledge (Peatti 1968; Field 1991; Fujisaka 1991a and 1991b). However, indigenous peoples are a primary source of useful knowledge for development purposes (Erdmann 1993). In introducing new ideas and technologies, therefore, it is necessary that the local people see them as meeting their needs. If felt needs do not exist, needs must first be "generated" by a consciously planned action.

The role of the international organizations, especially the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, is described as the key to reform negotiation in Africa. It is argued here that the future role of these institutions, including the United Nations agencies and the donor community in natural resources management, should be to support local initiatives in maintaining the productivity of the resource base while, at the same time, meeting the ever expanding and changing needs of a growing population.

For donors and development agents to encourage effective participation in subnational level efforts, the following structural changes must be initiated (Booth, 1992). First, there is need for adopting a policy of open disclosure for natural resources projects and programs. Second, information on donor-related projects should be disseminated more openly and freely. Third, the impact of donor projects on poverty should be assessed. Fourth, the advocacy role should be expanded. Fifth, there is a need for developing, in collaboration with other agencies, a focus on human, as well as economic development. Sixth, there is a need for mainstreaming their NGO relationships by maintaining cooperation with NGOs an integral part of regional and country programs. Seventh there is need for evaluating the structures and capacities of these organizations to determine how they can work more effectively.

An effective democratic participatory environment, at all levels of society, is essential for reform management. There are two main prerequisites for reform. First, the state must respect human rights. As already noted, there has to be rules in place to empower participants to freely air their views on issues that concern them as individuals, groups and associations. This bids for power devolution. Second, and indeed integral to the first, is education, both formal and informal, through which the cultivation of an informed, knowledgeable and vibrant civil society may be brewed. As a revolutionary tool, education is capable of creating behavioral changes towards the environment and natural resources management. Furthermore, education forms the cornerstone for sustainable reform

process through the informed processes for changing policies, programs and rules. It is within this context that development scholars, practitioners and policy-makers should search for conditions under which rewards and penalties will be applied in order to reduce transaction costs (arising from bribery, rationing, queuing) and hence consolidate the reform process.

It is now evident that many African governments are in a state of social, political and economic transition. It is, by and large, an informed and committed government that will facilitate the attainment of these goals. Efforts should be made by development practitioners and researchers to seize this window of opportunity to cultivate the culture of freedom of expression and association that underlies democratic participation in planning sustainable development (USAID 1993). A review of strategies and tools that promote these cherished goals of democracy form the core of the proceeding section.

## **SUB-NATIONAL LEVEL PARTICIPATORY PLANNING STRATEGIES AND TOOLS FOR NATURAL RESOURCES MANAGEMENT**

### **Introduction**

The preceding discussion points to a slow rate at which political and economic reforms are evolving and, more importantly, describes a state-dominated, donor-engineered national-level policy and program reform process in Africa. This subsection concedes the new role of African bureaucracies to be one of policy and program reform co-managers in a democratically participative environment with key stakeholders. The role of the central government, therefore, should be to create an enabling environment for the stakeholders to manage, protect and reclaim their environment and natural resources - a precondition for sustainable rural development. In essence, this means that the community members, the private sector, have a stake in streamlining procedures for formulation, approving and amending the NEAPs.

This approach has been adopted by the Clinton administration exemplified by the launching of a new generation of environmental protection for the next century. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency administrator calls it a "common sense approach" to environmental regulation, characterized by flexibility and innovation (Browner 1994). The agency's new direction is marked by the promotion of innovative environmental technology at home and abroad and greater public participation in protecting human health and natural resources. The strategy is, undoubtedly, as sound for the African countries as for the U.S.A.

In view of the experiences outlined in the preceding subsection, the development of participatory tools should be pegged around strategies capable of identifying who the stakeholders are and how they should play a role in the planning cycle (Biodiversity Support Program 1993). The philosophy underlying this paper is that all segments of society should participate in making decisions which govern their behavior and hence development as far as environmental and natural resources are concerned. It does not in any way, seek to jeopardize any particular party's role in enhancing sustainable natural resources management. It, instead, strives to redistribute responsibility and accountability to all parties in society- especially to those whose livelihoods have an effect upon natural resource systems.

### **Strategies and Tools for Participatory Planning Processes**

Development scholars have been on the forefront in designing methodologies to involve stakeholders in planning their development. The developing countries of Latin America, Asia and Africa have served as experimental sites for these tools.

A transdisciplinary team of researchers, together with community members, public officers, members of the private and popular sectors, should embark on a search for sustainable socio-economic ecological development at different spatial and institutional levels (Wade 1974; Bremer 1984; Conyers 1986; Cooke 1991). To this end, we propose a research methodology that will revolutionize the conventional top-down approach to resource planning. This transdisciplinary perspective is based on the "from the ground-up" approach with horizontal and vertical net-working and linking up. The methodology is deemed capable of capturing the dynamic qualities of society, its development agencies and resources which are essential inputs in formulating informed policies, programs and legislation (Kalyalya et al. 1988; Biodiversity Support Program 1993).

The tools for implementing the above strategy are documented in the Participatory Rural Appraisal Handbook (1991) and Tools for Gender Analysis (1993). Efforts are under way to call a workshop of practitioners and beneficiaries of participatory rural methodologies in order to standardize the tools used across Sub-Saharan Africa (Richard Ford of Clark University ; Michael Brown of PVOs/NGOs; Gender Participation Study Group of Clark University, pers. com.)

#### **Social Organizing for Identifying and Empowering Stakeholders**

It is imperative for a development policy researcher and practitioner to identify who the stakeholders are with respect to environmental and natural resources. There are many ways to reach this end. Equally important, however, is the role of the researcher in facilitating the empowerment of individuals, existing grassroots level groups and institutions and the creation of new ones using existing individuals and community concerns, values and aspirations.

The latter strategy may be pursued through supporting progressive candidates in the civil society who are capable of serving as reform champions. The preceding section has demonstrated the use of this strategy in the creation and strengthening of African NGOs and the private sector.

The tools for carrying out the above strategy include participant observation and institutional diagramming.

The researcher may capture these groups and individuals by using repetitive (preferably daily/seasonal) participant observation techniques. This methodology offers a unique opportunity to the researcher to unearth behavioral patterns which might have remained hidden from traditional survey methods.

As for the identification and analysis of existing institutions,

the researcher may employ the institutional diagramming

methodology outlined in the "Participatory Rural Appraisal Handbook, 1990".

The results will shed light on the differential significance of each institution as perceived by the community and, more importantly, to those institutions which may be relied upon to enhance and sustain the reform process.

A number of potentially key institutions at the national level, which may be replicated at subnational level, and whose involvement in the policy and program reform cycle would contribute to genuine democratic participation, have been proposed among others by Bratton (1989), USAID (1994), Binkerhoff and Kulibaba (1994). The list, based on an arbitrary categorization includes:

- (i) state bureaucrats
- (ii) international (bilateral and multilateral) donor agency officials
- (iii) local government officials
- (iv) NGOs (Non-Governmental Organisations) - developmental and grassroots based, both national and foreign
- (v) GONGOs (Governmental Non-Governmental Organisations)
- (vi) CBOs (Community Based Organizations) - popularly supported
- (vii) local residents, women, youth, elders and the poor

Further at the community level, development practitioners should strive to cultivate cross-networking coupled with vertical linkages. The establishment of environmental and natural resources liaison within key government departments and the private sector at different levels would facilitate exchange of information and promote the learning process amongst stakeholders. It is self evident that with locally rooted knowledge of local conditions and with informed community members, the environment will be better protected than could be with a distant, and somewhat foreign, bureaucracy. Being insiders, therefore, these individuals and groups, institutions are genuinely accountable and available to their community, local authority, central government and, indeed, to the international community in which they are grounded.

#### **Creation of a Public Policy and Program Reform Agenda for Enhancing Stakeholders' Democratic Participation**

Given the creation of a conducive environment as referred to above, there is a great chance for individuals, groups and institutions to air their concerns, and for the development practitioners, policy-makers and policy analysts to tap, internalize and, together with the stakeholders' representatives, analyze and transform those concerns into NEAPs.

Critical to this strategy is the need for easy access to public

information regarding the status of the natural resources and the environment. This is important because the more, and accurate, information the stakeholders have access to, the more effective they can be in helping solve environmental problems. For the purposes of this study, the key tools include community meetings, workshops, resource mapping, drama and the media as outlined below:

**Community Meetings:** At the community level, meetings of stakeholders may take several forms based on the socio-cultural setting (Community meeting--Baraza). Regardless of the format, community meetings promote horizontal net-working and consciousness raising- thus boosting the exchange of information about opportunities and problems that the members encounter in both different and similar circumstances. At a higher level, the sub-national or even national level, a respective conference when composed of the genuine stakeholders has great potential for designing, implementing and monitoring policy and program reform.

As noted above, there is a need to guard against misguided perceptions based on false beliefs. It is within these circumstances that mass "enlightenment" should be propagated. Both the development practitioner and policy researcher are well placed to undertake this role. The ensuing deliberations on issues that concern them may be presented to higher authorities for further synthesis in the planning cycle where direct participation of community representatives is promoted as equal partners.

**Workshops:** Unlike community gatherings, workshops, symposia and seminars, which tend to address more specific issues by particular groups/institutions, have a great potential to analyze and formulate resolutions regarding public policy and program agenda. Multistakeholder workshops, when carefully planned, help participants to better understand complex issues involved in environmental and natural resources development. In state sponsored workshops, care should be taken to ensure that people's/institutions' representatives are not "workshop hostages". The output of a candid debate will positively contribute to policy and program reform.

With the required arrangement, the workshop participants can elect their representative(s) to the higher decision-making level (vertical net-working and scaling up) to continue defending their interests.

In the reform cycle, the technique may be employed in the policy and program analysis, coordination and formulation operations of the design process, as well as in the implementation and monitoring and evaluation processes.

**Spatial Mapping:** Spatial diagramming as a participatory learning process provides an equal opportunity to stakeholders to view their problems and opportunities from a spatial perspective- the scale

not withstanding. The spatial data gathering exercise seeks to clarify stakeholders' perspectives of cooperation, competition and conflict at household, community, subnational, national and even international levels with respect to access, responsibility and control of resources.

On the basis of the above, **site specific** information and opinion generation can be transformed into input in the specific public agenda. This tool may be used by researchers to generate purposeful discussion with stakeholders on resource management and conservation issues. It may also be used as a final tool by both the stakeholders and the researchers for presenting the contemporary state of the human institutional and natural resource base in a spatial setting.

**Drama:** A policy researcher may take advantage of this technique to gather data and information on peoples'/institutions' perceptions of a particular public policy and program agenda. This would enable one to understand and interpret what a particular public policy and program agenda means for various groups in society and for the future of the country in general. In reality, the researcher should be "aggressive" enough to see to it that the reform process is successful. This means that the information so generated must be used to coordinate rule-making, streamline tenure arrangements, improve enforcement and compliance efforts and identify innovative approaches to environmental protection and technology (Browner 1994).

**Media:** In Africa, the media has proved to be an effective tool for popularizing occasionally unpopular government policies. In the current political liberalization era, the media has a strong role to play in disseminating alternative perspectives on a particular public policy and program agenda.

This tool, which includes radio, press, television, videography and photography, may be used by stakeholders to exchange views and by policy analysts to gather from and air their informed views to the stakeholders for debate and action. More importantly, the tool may be used for consciousness raising for community empowerment.

The media is, therefore, an efficient tool for communication to focus attention on, stimulate discussion about, raise awareness of, or begin the process toward a solution to particular local environmental problems.

### **The Spatial Dimension of Policy and Program Reform**

It is of utmost importance that the search for natural resources and environmental reform be situated in a specific position within

the power structure in society. (As pointed out above, in Africa power lies with the national government and in some instances countries have decentralized authorities. In this light the central government is known to wield power over a series of lower authorities.)-----Generally speaking, African governments are highly centralized, although some exceptions do exist

A policy researcher, should on the outset, analyze the function of various attributes of the power structure. To this end, two goals should be achieved: First, develop a clear understanding of the responsibility of key role occupants in the power structure in question. Second, create an the understanding of the communication networks in the power structure, both horizontally and vertically. These two goals will serve as a "bridge", linking the centralized powers and the reform process, thereby capturing the notches in the hierarchy at which pressure for change can be applied to bring about desired reforms. Equally important, though, is the "catalyst" role of these goals that is one of sustaining the reform process.

It is also equally important to identify the spatial scale of operation for policy and program impact assessment. This can be an administrative area, ecological unit, functional/operational unit or a combination of these in areas which stakeholders live. It is imperative that a "resource catchment area" be defined in order to capture the interplay of integrated social, cultural, economic and ecological concerns of both the individual unit and the global village.

In summary, it should be noted that the environmental and natural resources policy and program reform process should incorporate multistakeholders' needs, values, aspirations together with the requirements of the respective resources.

During the design process, efforts should be made to ensure first, that the stakeholders view the problems and opportunities in a systems context in the analysis phase; second, that their perspectives should be incorporated in the initial choice of problem solving/ solution seeking options; and third, that the designation of priorities and performance indicators to gauge sub-national level sustainability takes into account stakeholders' indigenous accumulated knowledge and experience in the formulation phase. In-built policy and program mechanisms, such as appointment of neutral liaisons (i.e. neither allied with nor influenced by an offending sub-national unit), should direct the design process.

The implementation process should, as far as possible, reflect the roles and responsibilities of all the stakeholders as postulated in the design process.

As for the monitoring and evaluation process, it is conceived here that the stakeholders be involved in assessing the set goals in order to instil continued feed-back between sub-national and

national and even international stakeholders and researchers. This process would produce the fruits for changing the rules that govern the development inertia, both at sub-national and national levels. There is need, therefore, to, first, publish and disseminate an environmental and natural resources status report to all stakeholders - a pro-active approach to resource management in a timely fashion; second, environment to ascertain that the stakeholders' perspective on the concerns influences the conversion process, preferably through an elected representative.

## CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

It is evident from the preceding discussion that African states are pursuing a promising course toward sustainable self-development in the twenty first century. The success of this course will very much depend upon the extent to which all segments of the civil society will participate in the decision-making process regarding matters relating to environmental and natural resources-- the backbone of African economies. Strategies and tools that enable the empowerment of stakeholders should be vigorously sought by all participants. Community based Participatory Rural Appraisal tools, when scaled up, have proved their ability to form the basis for sub-national level public awareness and participation, data collection and analysis, formulation of action plans and, hence, the sustenance of the reform process in the management and protection of environmental and natural resources in Sub-Saharan Africa (Richard Ford pers. com.).

It is self evident that, as local communities start working together, so will whole societies, the nation-state and hence the entire world, in an effort to build a healthier global economy and environment for present and future generations.

To this end, this paper addresses the need for, first, creating an enabling legal and political environment to facilitate development of civil organizations, NGOs, the private sector, local government, central government transparency and accountability and people-centered donor community. The role of strengthening the state bureaucracy to undertake this role cannot be overemphasized. This situation will allow for free expression of interests in a public agenda.

Second, there is also a need for natural resources and environmental policies, programs and, indeed legislation to incorporate effective public participation and local flexibility.

Third, for reform sustainability, there is a need for ensuring access to public information and communication facilities. Because "information is power" a knowledgeable community is able to test and replicate meaningfully involved in all processes of the planning cycle.

As a starting point, it is proposed that a study be launched to test and replicate the afore stated strategies and tools as a basis for documenting behavioral changes among the key stakeholders. In

a nutshell, the pilot project seeks to first investigate the extent to which the on-going political and economic reform process provides conditions that are conducive to the participation of sub-national level stakeholders (indigenous formal, informal NGOs and the private sector) participation in NEAPs that exist in some African countries. We must also test the practicability of the proposed strategies and tools for identifying (i) Who participates (ii) How participation occurs and (iii) What organizational units exist at the sub-national level as the basis for attaining the first goal. This study will contribute to the World Resources Institute's on-going NEAPs project on "Expanding Civil Society Participation in African Environmental Policy Reform".

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