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GIVING VOICE: INSTIGATING DEBATE ON ISSUES OF CITIZENSHIP, PARTICIPATION AND ACCOUNTABILITY

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ABSTRACT

While there is a near unanimity on the need for participation there is yet no such agreement on the type and degree of participation to be adopted in a particular project. One thing that has never being doubt is the fact that local people have not being accorded their rightful recognition and respect by most intervention agencies hence the failure of some projects.

So how does a project which seeks to address the issues of Citizenship, participation, and Accountability using of variety of participatory methodologies ranging from Key Informant Interviews, Focus Group Discussion, Theatre for Development and Community Action Plan fare? This is especially against the backdrop of a multi –ethnic, multi –religious and politically complex society as Nigeria.

This paper seeks to examine the use of these methodologies highlighting issues drawn out, the successes and limitations of the findings for future research.

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The research concludes that as effective as the methods used appeared to be, there were a lot of questions and issues unanswered beyond the immediate mandate of the project which begs for attention in order for the communities to move towards genuine development and stop shadow chasing and open display of sometimes misplaced aggression.

Introduction

A good way perhaps to engender debate on the issues of citizenship, participation and accountability is to adopt the methodology of participation itself especially in a project that desires to scale up field experiences and lessons into national policies and eventually legislation (Vabi 2001:21). This paper sets out to examine the participatory methods used in a projectò Citizenship, Participation and Accountabilityò by the Theatre For Development Centre (TFDC), Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria Nigeria and The Nigerian Popular Theatre Alliance (NPTA) a national NGO based in Zaria.

The underlining assumptions for the use of Participatory methods in this kind of project are founded on the fact that the local communities have adequate knowledge of their environments where the issues of citizenship, participation and accountability directly obtain. Another issue is to recognize and respect local knowledge which is often in the main neglected by intervention agencies. Which ever of these assumptions obtain, the most crucial thing is the recognition that the issues to be discussed and tackled need the collective

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input of everybody especially members of the communities concerned. The issue there fore is not whether participatory methods are desirable but how they can be used effectively to obtain optimum result.

The road to participation itself is and has always been winding and complex, just like participation itself is a contested terrain (Okwori 2004 :1) As a recurring theme in discussions on development projects it is vast and complex and a definition may rest on the condition and application to which it is put. The final outcome however is to enable rural and urban dwellers to become active participants in the definition of strategies for improving their livelihoods systems (Vabi 2001:21)

However while there is a near unanimity on the need for participation, there is yet no such agreement on methods of participation or the degree of participation to be adopted in each particular project. This has prompted Pretty et al (1995) to develop seven typologies of participation as listed below;

1. Passive participation
2. Participation in information giving
3. Participation by consultation
4. Participation for material incentives
5. Functional participation
6. Interactive participation
7. Self mobilization (Kumar 2001 : 24)

Thus while the spectacular collapse of projects conceived and founded on conventional wisdoms which ascribed the monopoly of knowledge to a few experts in

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government and development agencies brought about the acceptance of participation (Comwall 2001; Gaventa 2001; Gaventa and Valderrama 1999), the glaring limitations of the earliest modes of participation practiced led to the development of the above typology to show the degree and intensity of participation.

If the earlier practitioners saw the limitation of limited participation in a physical project conceived and executed to the exclusion of the people how much more of a project that is supposed to discuss such ôabstractö issues as citizenship, participation and accountability?

The Context

Nigeria, notes one of its foremost leaders and nationalist Chief Obafemi Awolowo, is ña mere geographical expressionò (Awolowo 1947: 47). If this description is ambivalent, Okwori is more forthcoming by declaring that:

> What we have in Nigeria is a collection of ethnicities bounded together by the force of politics which was created and instituted by the British. So, Nigeria is no more than a patchwork of colonial creation. That Nigeria is such a patchwork underscores the crisis of citizenship, participation and accountability that bedevils the republic (Okwori Quoted in Abah 2003:1)

While one may not totally agree with the above views, the way and manner of the union and the crisis of under

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-development that has bedeviled the nation state called Nigeria lays credence to such extreme views. A nation may not after all emerge just by political fiat. Thus the old kingdoms were merely brought together to form a country without an attempt at creating an organic unit. But while the old kingdoms functioned by coercion to keep annexed territories together, there was a feeble sense of equality in the new union in principle whereas in reality, there were cracks as wide as the largest express way in the world. Not once did this crack rear its head. At least a civil war was fought all in the attempt to maintain a fragile unity

The fact that the nation had spent the better part of its nearly four and half decade of political independence under the military compounds the problem. The military with its coercive apparatuses has maintained ópeaceô at the expense of genuine unity, since every attempt to dissent is silenced; people have merely lived under mutual suspicion. Not even the tokenism of state creation has solved the problem since people are almost always arbitrarily lumped together.

Such was the situation with the return to civil rule in 1999 that the country was engulfed in varying degrees of crises most of which were the attempt by people to find space to express their identity in a suffocating set up devoid of the true spirit of participation and accountability.

Historically, disputes over access to and control of territory, material, economic and natural resources have been one of the dominant sources of conflict.

However, in Nigeria, tied to the above is the

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question of political domination and marginalisation. Added to this is religious intolerance and identity articulation. Since the transition to Civil rule, the Niger Delta has been in violent eruptions where oil producing communities are calling for the self control of their resources since there is no sense of accountability from the central government.

Ethnic and religious conflicts have engulfed Shagamu, Kano and Lagos while tension and threat hangs ominously across many states in the country .Since the 1987 eruption of religious violence in Kaduna State and other parts of the North. Kaduna in particular has remained a hotbed of violent ethnic / religious confrontations marched only by Kano.

There is no love lost between the Southern Kaduna Communities wishing to assert their cultural identities and their Northern Kaduna (largely Muslim counterparts). In the conflagrations that have attended this relationship either in Zangon Kataf or in Kafanchan, there is always a thin divide between religion and cultural expression. In each case lots of live and properties were lost. If these conflicts started during the military era why are they finding larger expressions today? The reason seems to be located in the question of governance. The combination of institutions, laws, procedures and norms, which allow people to express their concerns and fight for their interests, within a predictable and relatively equitable context, forms the basis of good governance. Efficient administration of Public resources is an additional element é the entire edifice of good governance ultimately rests upon legitimate use

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of power: public authority must be sanctioned by the consent of the governed.

Such was the situation when the Nigerian Popular Theatre Alliance (NPTA) and the Theatre for Development Centre, Ahmadu Bello University got a grant from the Institute of Development Research University of Sussex United Kingdom to do the research into the project under study. According to the project leader/ lead researcher Oga Steve Abah:

> This project aims to explore the different peopleôs understandings of citizenship and the different ways in which citizenship may determine rights and privileges in Nigeria in the light of factors such as location/ space, ethnicity, gender and religion é (Abah 2001)

The first year of the project was to work in two states of the country namely; Kaduna and Benue. This write up covers the work done in Kaduna state, specifically in Yangon Kate local Government Area.

Zangon Kataf

A brief background of Zangon Kataf to put the discussion of citizenship, participation and accountability into correct perspective. Zangon Kataf is in the southern part of Kaduna State. It comprises three chiefdoms namely, Atyap, the Ikulu and the Fadan Kamanton chiefdoms. [Ikulu became a Local Government of its own recently] It has 36 districts with Zonkwa as

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the Local Government Headquarters. Other major towns are Samaru Kataf, Kamuru Ikulu, Zangon Urban district where the Hausas reside, Kamanton, Anchunan Sarki, and Angwan Wakili in Zango. The languages spoken are Atyap, Bajju, Ikulu, Kamanton, Hausa, and Fulani. The major preoccupation of the people is farming. There are also a few civil servants in the area, working in the Local Government Secretariats, the Education Inspectorate and schools.

The struggles around which a lot of crises emanate here are both political and ethnic. The Atyap and the Ikulus have struggled for a long time to get their chiefdoms instead of remaining under the Zaria emirate. It was the political arrangement which put all of the southern part of Kaduna under the jurisdiction of Zazzau that occasioned the whole region to be referred to as Southern Zaria, a term that the peoples in the zone have fought against and changed. They have also been granted their political independence from Zaria by the recent creation of three chiefdoms. An Atyap now administers the Kataf district within which these chiefdoms exist.

The nature of the crises here has been tied to livelihood. It has been over the ownership of land. It has therefore been between the indigenous peoples here and the so-called Hausa settlers/strangers on the one hand and between the Atyap and the Ikulus (who are both indigenous) on the other.

Zangon Kataf is a flash point for religious and ethnic violence, particularly since the 1992 crisis, which was a religio-ethnic one resulting from the strug-

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gle to assert ownership of land between the indigenes and the Hausas. Since this crisis, the relationship between the indigenes and the Hausas has been one of suspicion. (Abah 2004:3) Zagon Kataf thus constitutes a fertile ground to study the crisis of citizenship participation and accountability for its immediate complexity in composition on ethnic and political grounds.

Using Participatory Methods to Give Voice on Citizenship Participation and Accountability

The key questions/ research focus that instigated the trip to the field were:

How do the way people conceive their identities, interests and belonging shape their sense of entitlement to different rights and privileges? Does this expectation change over time and space? What are the influences of location/space, ethnicity, gender and religion?

How do patterns of poverty (including poverty of expression/ voice, poverty of education, of employment, poverty of citizenship) affect the peopleôs sense of citizenship and ability to make rights claims?

What factors affect and limit the proper application/ operation of citizenship, participation and accountability in the practical business of governance, and in resource management?

The tools or participatory methods used were Focus Group Discussion (FGD), Key Informant Interviews (KII), and Theatre for Development (TFD) and Community Action Plan (CAP). The locales for the work were Angwan Wakili (Zonzon ward) and Kamuru

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Ikulu. In all six (6) FGDs were conducted in the two communities. At Angwan Wakili, FGD was conducted with the men, women and youths while in Kamuru Ikulu; FGD was conducted with women, men and council of chiefs in session. Five KIIs were conducted in the two communities with the following; the LG Chairperson- Mrs. Lauretia Mallam, the councilor representing Ikulu and the Agwom Ikulu Mr. Bitrus Kabile Ibrahim. Others are the Agwa Atyap and the Wazirin Ikulu Mallam Habu Mutum. As all these activities were going on in the course of the workshop, rehearsals for the drama performances went on and eventually performances held on the final day in the two communities while community action plans followed immediately after the performances.

Based on the checklist that was drawn up, the research was able to draw out the perceptions of identity and citizenship in the two communities. The primary identity of residents of Angwan Wakili is Atyap while that of the Kamuru Ikulu is Ilkulu based on their language or ethnic origins. However, the people speak neighbouring languages freely in day to day transaction of business or social interactions. Thus it is difficult to distinguish between an Atyap and Ikulu with their neighbours like Marwa, Fanstway Kagoro Takut Bajju Kachechere etc except the Atyap has facial marks. How ever the very nature of the Nigeria state makes it imperative to express identity outside their location or when their immediate interest is threatened. An Atyap would not hesitate to quickly engage his brother in Abuja or Kaduna once he needs assistance and is sure the language confers an automatic advantage. Identity

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expression to generate interest or otherwise is dependent on location and space.

Not surprisingly too, the people seem to have common interests. The men in Agwan Wakili are interested in their farming activities and so are unanimous in their search for fertilizers at affordable price and water pumping machines for dry season farming. There is no ethnic affiliation when the middlemen raise the stakes to exploit the farmers by ensuring that the pumping machines are unavailable during the dry seasons only especially from January when farmers now have to pay forty thousand naira (N40,000) instead of thirty thousand naira (N30,000) The youths want jobs to further their education in a community where more than eighty percent of youths have at least gone up to secondary school. An old man however insists that if government will make fertilizers available, the youths would not be so desperate for the so called white collar job.

At Kamuru Ikulu ironically the agitation for availability of fertilizer is louder among the women since they do most of the farming. The men are mostly engaged in heavy drinking of local beer called Burukutu and in all the FGD and KII the women expressed their interest to include the stoppage of excessive drinking of the local beer by their men. Skill acquisitions, education and fair representation s in politics at the state level were the other frequently expressed interest.

The expression of these interests has always brought the people on collision course with the government. The people for instance are still dissatisfied and bitter with the government for collecting their money

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and supplying inadequate fertilizer and not refunding the balance of their monies to them. If the fertilizer issue demonstrates the denial of rights at the local level, the entire population of the local government is still agitating for proper counting and delineation of polling booths to ensure that those of voting age are not disenfranchised. This they insist may be persisting in the entire southern part of the state thus giving the north undue numerical advantage to perpetuate itself in power.

Although both men and women in the two communities who conceive their entitlements to rights of education, employment, basic amenities and polling booths are still waiting for the fulfillment of these rights, the case of the women in the two communities deserve special attention. Even though ironically, women are representing the two communities the person of the local government chairperson Mrs. Mallam and the lady counselor representing Kamuru Ikulu, this appears to be symbolic accidents rather than deliberate achievement of gender equity. The women in Kamuru Ikulu for instance are groaning under the weight of the burden that their men have placed on them by drinking heavily and dying early thereby living them as widows to cater for the family. At community gathering the elderly widows are humoured by being represented at public gatherings but that is where it stops their views are not taken into consideration in taking crucial decisions. If women can be called to meetings as the new leaders of households after their men have drunk themselves to death why canâ t they have a voice? The fate of the women here is akin to what women go through in most part of the world where there is low awareness of

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womenôs rights for;

> From most part of the state, the law, politics, religion, higher education, and the economy institutions that have been historically developed by men, are currently dominated by men, and are symbolically interpreted from the standpoint of men. As such they are ñgendered institutionsò. The only major institution in which women have had a central role, although a subordinate one has been the family (Acker 1992:249)

With this community, just like most traditional communities in Nigeria, one wonders if the society wants to respect the convention on the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women (1979) to which it is a signatory. Article 1 of this convention is clear in the fact that any distinction, exclusion or restriction made on the basis of sex which has effect or purpose of impairing on nullifying the recognition, enjoyment or exercise by women of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, social, cultural or other fields is unacceptable. As such a change is demanded in the traditional role of men as well as the role of women in society and in the family to achieve full equality between men and women (Quinn 1997: 30).

In all these, does interest and sense of belonging determine privilege? To an extent, yes. There are things that are considered as the exclusive preserve of certain people. To become a Chief is a privilege. Ironically, women have by dint of education and marriage ac-

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quired political power. The Chairperson of the local council Mrs Mallam is from Kagoro but married to an Atyap, the councilor representing Kamuru Ikulu is an Atyap married to an Ikulu man. So while women are generally oppressed there have by either error of omission and commission become political heads to their men. On the other hand poverty has made women to loose their sense of self esteem and the Ikulu woman will do anything to get a job as a cleaner in the council.

Location, Ethnicity and Citizenship

In drawing out issues under this sub-head, the research had to use all other instruments beyond interviews. Drama in particular came in handy. The research found out that there is a strong influence of location, space and ethnicity on citizenship. Land ownership for instance is communal and not even the Chief can lay claim to the land. How ever, those who are settlers are not entitled to permanent claim on any land they may have been so privileged to hire and work on. In this regard, the Hausas are particularly at the receiving end. As migrants ñCiraniò they rent land and are supposed to tell even their third generation no matter how long they have come to live in the community that the land is given them on loan.

Sequel to the above, the drama that was done to instigate issues, generated considerable tension. The project drama on Citizen Agaba who had lived for so long in a community and now demanded for scholarship for his children elicited and generated debate that the research team was afraid might degenerate. There

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was so much verbal mutual altercation between the settlers and the indigenes. An exasperated Atyap man could not understand why it is an issue that a man had lived long in a community and wanted certain rights for the child and himself. According to him, it is only a bastard that has two homes. For him the Hausa settler can not have home in Kano and another one in Zango. This looks logical enough especially in the context of Nigeriaôs reality but when this word was dropped the hall in which we were having the workshop shook.

On the surface it would seem as if there is only conflict between the Southern Kaduna ethnic groups and Hausa. But how mistaken. Though because of long historical factors the so called Hausa-Fulani seem to be the common enemy, there is no love lost among the other ethnic groups like the Ikulu and Bajju. A contributor remarked that if you look around your area and you see more mosques than churches then you donôt belong. This is with reference to the dominant religions of the settlers and indigenes. How ever the Bajju- Ikulu crisis at Anchunan blows a lid on this assertion. Even though there are many churches in fact hardly any mosque in this community, there is no peace. The Ikulus see the Bajju who live at Anchunan as visiting hunters a mild term for settlers and so demand they pay tribute to the Ikulu Chief but the Bajjus are alleged to pay their tribute to their chief at Fadan Kamanton. Thus while the ethnic groups struggled for and got chiefdoms to liberate them from the shackles of Zaria, when they come home to roost, their immediate problems still persist.

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Beyond Hausa and Southern Kaduna Dichotomy

It is true that the research succeeded in throwing up the sharp cleavages that existed among the ethnic groups and the mutual suspicion that characterize their relationship but after this what happens? With effective dialogue with the people or what Diaz-Bordenave (1989:11) outlined as the new functions of communication in a participative society:

*Help in the development of a communityôs cultural identity

*Act as a vehicle for citizen self expression

*Facilitate problem articulation

*Serve as tools for diagnosis of communityôs problems but at the end of the research it is obvious that there are issues outside the border of citizenship in the two communities.

What has come out clearly is that there are extraneous variables that impinge on the questions of citizenship far more than what appears at the surface. The Ikulu, Atyap, Bajju and Hausa woman for instance may not fare better and may in fact be undergoing the same oppression and deprivation.

A common phenomenon in the communities is the role of women in the economic lives of these communities. In both Angwan Wakili and Kamuru Ikulu women constitute the economic mainstay. The situation is so bad in Kamuru Ikulu that the women do not only provide sustenance for the family but the men live recklessly and their life style affects their life expectancy. They die young and leave the women with the burden of catering for the children. In a typical patrilineal soci-

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ety, even though the women are virtually responsible for the children, the children bear the fathers name. In the event of the non availability of resources to train the children, the girl child is the first casualty. The man may marry four wives who labour on the farm from dawn to dusk while the man simply indulges in drinking and may even collect money from one of the wives who may in that set up be competing for his attention. In this situation the denial of citizenship may be gender based even though one can not deny the tensions existing between the various ethnic groups.

Another serious issue is that of poverty which has no ethnic group. While the different ethnic groups may be at each others throat, poverty contributes a lot to the denial of rights of the citizens. In fact poverty kills the voice of the people. The people are not only deprived of their rights but poverty prevents them from demanding for their rights. The physical appearance of the people especially women speak volume. The poverty is both material and mental. The people are ready to abdicate their responsibility even in matters that affect them directly. The people do not for instance know where to go to address the issue of under counting in the census figures and under representation in polling centres that is denying them voice and choice during elections. This subsequently makes them to look upon the research team as messiahs. One old man implores the team. ñYou have now heard our problems and I see you as people of government even though you said you are not. But please help us to let them at the top know what our problems are. We need government presence here.ò

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The old man touches the nerve centre of the problem but got the route to the solution wrong. It is possible and indeed palpable that there are crisis between the groups but the larger issue is the crisis of governance. The people are excluded from governance and government only comes to them when it is convenient. We have already noted that there is crisis even at the level of voting since a lot of people are deprived of their rights by the deliberate undercounting of the wards but if ever the people are consulted it stops as soon as they vote. Only the few educated people have access to employment at the local government level. Of the elected officials only members of the inner caucus close to the Chairperson have knowledge of what comes into the council. The FGD with the councilors showed that only members of the all powerful finance and general purpose committee (F &GPC) have knowledge of the monthly allocation and the disbursement.

What is more the people are constantly hoodwinked with the so-called zero allocation which means anything to nothing. Zero allocation affects payment of workers salary and provision of basic amenities but not the officials gallivanting the entire country or even traveling abroad when it suites them. This is more so for members of the kitchen cabinet.

The level of corruption in the council is mind boggling. The people recount the comical nature of the revenue collection process on the local market days. According to them on each market day the local government revenue personnel come with their own printed receipt booklet which they proceed to issue to people

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and collect money, towards the close of the market, they bring out the original receipt of the local government and ôhelpô government collect little money to fulfil all righteousness. With this the council already under funded from the federal allocation can not generate meaningful internal revenue to supplement. So why nor face your neighbour who is a supposed settler even when the government is the common enemy.

Surprisingly the reaction of the people to the impact of the council on their lives turned out to be completely different from that of their traditional leaders. While the Agwa Atyap and Agwan Ikulu and their council spoke glowingly of the efforts of the council during the KIIs the people have different tales. The only plausible explanation for this divergent reaction from the people living in the same communities could be that the chiefs are on monthly salary, and are regularly paid since the council would want to avoid offending an important section of traditional elite and also that the chiefs themselves may not want to lose their privilege position so they would not talk bad of the council officials. There is a very funny arrangement in Nigeria where the chief is constitutionally supposed to be under the council chairperson and is in fact obliged to seek approval from him/her before travelling out of his domain but in reality, some of the traditional rulers are so powerful that all they need to do is to put a call through to those in higher authority and the chairperson is as good as gone. We were not surprised at the discordant tunes coming from the traditional rulers.

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The council hides under the zero allocation and refuses to be accountable to the people. In fact a lot of the people do not know that the council gets any funding at all. The people were pleasantly surprised when during the discussions they came to learn that they have a right to go to the council and demand for the monthly allocation and how it is spent.

Conclusion

There can be no doubt that the method used by the project actually gave voice to the voiceless and threw up issues that were at the background and remained hitherto under discussed or at best mentioned in whispers . Opening them up also opened new possibilities of their being addressed. Also, the methods used allowed for triangulation. It was obvious when either the chiefs or the council officials where been economical with the truth. In fact where we had a councillor in attendance at any of the public performances and the subsequent post performance discussions, it was not uncommon to hear a villager shout at a councillor or even an elder who tries to lie? This was uncommon at ordinary times because nothing will bring them together in the first place not to even talk of exchanging words.

A critical issue from this research is how seemingly peripheral issues became so central to the resolution of the central issue of citizenship that the project originally set out to address. Poverty, accountability, corruption, gender and other issues appear to be the furnace fanning the embers of ethnic deprivation. In other

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words, while the crisis of citizenship no doubt stares us in the face, these other issues must be taken along if the major crisis is to be addressed.. This brings to fore the problem of who sets the priority in a research of this nature. Setting the priority has direct bearing on the eventual solutions to whatever problems we seek to address. Oga Steve Abah cautions:

The problem is not that of solutions to problems being selected by external development agencies, but that of who identifies the problem and who finally decides what development a particular community needs. The identification and final development projects to be embarked upon are made the prerogative of the bureaucrats and technocrats in urban centres. This may very well embody the disaster story for many botched rural projects. Because the technocrat who is far away from the village, and the bureaucrat who is following laid down criteria and bookish theories is removed from the hard realities of rural poverty, rural problems and therefore what the priorities for the disenfranchised rural dwellers are likely to be. The human touch to development which of necessity, results from consultation with and, more significantly, participation by the rural persons has been lost.

In this instance though we were not tackling a physical project per se, we left the communities having sufficiently roused the people but other issues reared their heads that were not the direct focus of the project but that now had to be tackled before the major issue can be solved.

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This does not take any thing away from the project. The methodology generated enough data and the discussions at least put the problems in clearer perspective and the possibility of addressing them and pushing them to the higher authorities.

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