

CHAPTER 3

COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT PROGRAMMES

3.1. INTRODUCTION

Community empowerment programmes are intended to improve the socio-economic and political standing of communities which are backward, powerless and experience decline. They are programmes that require the involvement of the local leadership in improving their own communities with their minimum reliance from outsiders. Scott, Cochran and Voth (1988:58) maintain that through community empowerment programmes, rural communities are afforded opportunities to assess their needs, prepare business plans and implement the projects that are designed to improve their conditions.

Anyanwu (1988:11) argues that community empowerment programmes are not necessarily conducted to improve things like roads, schools, community halls and water supply in communities, "but principally the changes that have taken place in people themselves." It is of vital importance to mention that community empowerment programmes address community conditions through enhancing the wider participation.

This chapter discusses examples of the community empowerment programmes. The researcher selected four examples of programmes, two American and the other two South African. These models were specifically selected because they are relevant to this study which seeks to evaluate the impact of a community empowerment programme on rural communities. The models are relevant to this study because alike the Community Based Public Works Programme (CBPWP), which the researcher seeks to evaluate, they concern rural communities which share similar characteristics of being poverty stricken, powerless and lack infrastructure.

The Rural Community Revitalization Project (RCRP) was introduced by the Idaho State University to diversify the deteriorating conditions of Buhl, Lava Hot Spring and Tenton Valley in the Idaho county of the United States of America. The Black Community Developers Program (BCD) utilised the Black Organisational Autonomy (BOA) model to improve the social and economic conditions of the community in Little Rock, Arkansas in the United States of America.

Characteristics of community empowerment programmes in the American context will be identified and discussed.

The second section of the chapter discusses the Local Economic Development Programme which was introduced by the Department of Local Government and Traditional Affairs of the Northern Province in South Africa, to improve the social and economic conditions of the disadvantaged communities, with special reference to the rural areas, women and the youth. The second South African community empowerment programme example to be included in the discussions will be Community -Based Nutrition Programme (CBNP) which was introduced by the Department of Health and Welfare of the Northern Province, to empower communities, with special reference to those in the rural areas, women, the disabled and the youth, through self-help projects, and the introduction of a feeding scheme for the primary school pupils.

The final part of this section will discuss the characteristics of community empowerment programmes in the South Africa.

3.2. BACKGROUND OF COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT IN AMERICAN

The community empowerment approach was selected over the self-help, conflict and the technical assistance approaches, because of its effectiveness in addressing both the internal and external problems of communities. According to Horton (1992:6), community development interventions that

utilised the self -help, the conflict and the technical assistance approaches in America, failed to develop communities successfully.

Horton (1992) and Chambers and McBeth (1992) discuss the limitations of these three approaches.

3.2.1. Self -Help Approach

This approach concentrated much on the self -help and had nothing to do with the community. An approach of this kind concentrates largely on the economic development of an entire society rather than of a specific community. Chambers and McBeth (1992:22) argue that underdevelopment and problems in the communities are caused by the process of replacing the community, "*gemeinschaft*" with the society, "*gesellschaft*". These two concepts were contributed by Toennies (1992:12) to refer to pre-industrial associations that are differentiated from the industrialized society, respectively.

People who utilise the self-help approach of community development go about recruiting businesses and resources for the communities. Instead of problems being resolved, they become increasingly entrenched. Because many of the problems of poor communities require socio-economic solutions, "it would be appropriate if the self -help approach has an implication for community involvement in their own development" (Horton, 1992:4).

3.2.2. Conflict Approach

This perspective has a clear concentration on the even distribution of resources amongst communities and has "confrontational tactics". Horton (1992:6) maintains that the conflict perspective is very effective in the short-term development of communities, but has a limitation of sustainability.

3.2.3. Technical Assistance Approach

This approach has its mission of providing societies with infrastructures such as bridges, schools, roads, etc, (Horton,1992:6; Chambers & McBeth, 1992:22). According to Sundet and Mermelstein (1988:94), the technical assistance perspective of community development has four components namely; expert knowledge, recognised need for assistance from a particular community, a good relationship between the agency providing the community development and the recipient community, and the availability of experts to facilitate the process.

Yet the technical assistance approach in the United States of America failed as it ignored grassroots input and participation (Horton, 1992:6). Programmes need to consider community participation in their projects if they are to succeed because “community development model with emphasis on local development and high interpersonal interaction appears to be well suited to helping solve current problems” (Sundet & Mermelstein, 1998 :93).

All these community development strategies failed because they ignored the most important ingredients of effective community empowerment such as participatory democracy, understanding, education and training and self-directed leadership.

Horton (1992:11) supports the introduction of an effective approach towards the development of rural communities, namely, the community empowerment approach which he terms Black Community Development.

Community empowerment is at present the most effective approach towards solving some American problems, such as lack of educational facilities, unskilled leadership in the negro communities, unemployment, lack of retailing shopping, suicide, bankruptcies, substance abuse and hospitalisation (Chambers & McBeth, 1992:6; Horton, 1992:2-5 and Sundet & Mermelstein, 1988:94-95).

The researcher chose examples of community empowerment programmes in the United States of America due to the reason that they were intended to develop the rural communities that are largely blacks and experience problems similar with those in South Africa.

The American community empowerment programmes to be discussed in this study are the Rural Community Revitalization Project (RCRP), and the Black Community Developers Program (BCDP).

3.3. AMERICAN COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT PROGRAMMES

3.3.1. RURAL COMMUNITY REVITALIZATION PROJECT

The Rural Community Revitalization Project (RCRP) was introduced in 1988 in the three demonstration sites by the Idaho State University, and was funded by the Northwest Area Foundation. It “focussed on the importance of enhancing the ability of local leaders to direct revitalization efforts in their own communities” (Chambers & McBeth, 1992:26). The beneficiaries of this project were the rural communities in the Buhl, Lava Hot Spring and Tenton Valley, in the Idaho county, United States of America.

The RCRP’s other aim was to revitalise three collapsing rural communities. Buhl was hard -hit by farm crisis and unemployment, and as a consequence it needed revitalisation. Lava Hot Spring’s tourist attraction declined, experienced revenue losses and its local government could no longer provide essential services to the community. Lastly, Tenton Valley is situated in a high altitude region and experiences long severe winters, 67% of its property was owned by outsiders and about 17% of its work force was emigrating elsewhere due to higher rates of unemployment.

The RCRP became successful because more money was channelled to the communities and new jobs were created for the communities. According to Chambers and McBeth (1992:29-30), reasons for the RCRP’s success in revitalising the three demonstration sites are as follows:

- * Communities actively participated in the decision making process of their community organisations.
- * Organisations in those three sites achieved in developing their own leadership capacity.
- * Feelings, knowledge and skills of the local leadership improved as they were empowered through their interaction with the project.
- * The technical assistance funds were under local control and allowed the “communities to acquire specialised services and training that would have otherwise been unavailable to them” (Chambers & McBeth, 1992:30).

Successful community empowerment programmes do not only improve the infrastructure of the communities, but they also develop the knowledge, skills and attitudes of the communities. The Rural Community Revitalization Project was successful because it concentrated on the capacity building and the strong participation of the community which are important elements of the effective community empowerment programme.

The second American type of community empowerment programme to be discussed is the Black Community Developers Program.

3.3.2. THE BLACK COMMUNITY DEVELOPERS PROGRAM

The Black Community Developers (BCD) utilised the Black Organisational Autonomy (BOA) model presented by the Sociology Department of the Iowa State University, to address both the social and economic problems of the black community living in Little Rock, Arkansas in the United States of America. The BOA model was successful in developing a black community from being a just “food and pantry and a shelter for the homeless,” by the year 1987, to being “a leading developer/ sponsor of regional antidrug

conferences, organizer of public forums / debates for candidates of major state offices” and a respected black organisation in the state in 1989 (Horton, 1992:14).

Horton (1992:6-7) maintains that the BOA model is an effective and efficient tool towards the development of black communities as it addresses both the internal and external problems of the communities which other models failed to satisfy.

The BOA model has five principles which will be briefly discussed in this section, namely;

- * economically autonomous black institution
- * internally developed and controlled data sources
- * emphasis on black history and culture
- * the development and incorporation of females in leadership roles
- * socially inclusive leadership.

* **ECONOMICALLY AUTONOMOUS BLACK INSTITUTION**

The first element of the BOA model is economically autonomous black institution which is stated as follows: “The organisations of the black community must have the independence and control to develop programs and policies and should be free from manipulation by the funding state departments or non-governmental organisations” (Horton, 1992:8).

Black Americans were able to develop their own financial, educational and religious institutions.

* INTERNALLY DEVELOPED AND CONTROLLED DATA SOURCES

The second element of the BOA model is internally developed and controlled data (Horton, 1992:8).

According to this principle, the information that is relevant for the programme should have been gathered by the black people themselves. This information enables them to properly plan and develop their own projects. The information will also inform the community leadership or organisations about their internal trends and problems. Gibson and Worden (1994:27) maintain that communities can be trained to gather information related to their community decline or growth.

* EMPHASIS ON BLACK HISTORY AND CULTURE

The third element of the BOA model is emphasis on black history and culture (Horton, 1992:9).

It was identified that “the major obstacle to cohesiveness within the black communities is the increasing level of class inequality that causes conflicts, in-fights and mistrust amongst them” (Horton, 1992:11). Blacks from the middle and lower classes should co-operate to one another, as this will enable them to effectively develop their community organisations. Nkuhlu (1994:8) discusses this under avoidance of reliance on outside experts principle of the IDT model of community empowerment and suggests that those with skills and knowledge should impart them to communities that they are empowering so that there would be minimised friction and mistrust between them.

* THE DEVELOPMENT AND INCORPORATION OF FEMALES IN LEADERSHIP ROLES

The fourth element of the BOA model is the development and incorporation of females in leadership roles (Horton, 1992:9).

American women were responsible for the formation of the strongest organisational support base, namely; the black church. The programmes and projects should consider placing women in leadership positions. Licuanan, Panjaitan and Es (1996:135) contend that community empowerment programmes will be successful only when women are afforded an opportunity to actively participate in them.

* SOCIALLY INCLUSIVE LEADERSHIP

The fifth element of the BOA model is the socially inclusive leadership (Horton, 1992:9).

Black community empowerment programmes and projects are socially inclusive in nature. The programmes and projects should include members from all the classes and the political affiliations. Fair representation does away with the perception that only the elites are good representatives of their communities. Horton (1992:13) advises that "many of the most effective leaders in the black community have been grassroots people who need not be socially, economically and politically sound."

The BCD programme was initiated with minimal funds obtained through fundraising. It later received donations from business, and finally the local authority considered advancing credit for its future projects.

Horton (1992:15) believe that the programme was successful because the majority of its participants were females, its organisations have authority in making key decisions, was democratic and socially inclusive of those

members of the educational and occupational sectors, and that members had a grassroots orientation.

3.4. CHARACTERISTICS OF THE COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT PROGRAMMES IN THE AMERICAN COMMUNITIES.

From the literature investigation of the Rural Community Revitalization Project and the Black Community Developer's Program, the researcher identified the following characteristics of the American community empowerment programmes:

- * Their programmes are effective in empowering communities, and are of a long-term nature, usually running for years.
- * Their programmes develop from micro to macro organisations, and as a consequence they are highly sustainable.
- * Their programmes are initiated and supported by the educational institutions such as universities who usually possess the necessary skills and expertise in the community development arena.
- * Their programmes run concurrently with research studies in order to consistently evaluate their impacts on communities.
- * Usually communities apply the leveraging method of obtaining funds, i.e. they contribute certain amounts to convince the funding institutions that they are worth funding. Leveraging will be discussed in detail in the next chapter.
- * Their programmes are utilised to diversify the deteriorating conditions of cities, towns, counties, and the environment.

- * Community empowerment is the most favoured approach for the development of the disadvantaged communities in the American Society.

The second section of this chapter focuses on two examples of South African community empowerment programmes, namely the Local Economic Development Programme and the Community- Based Nutrition Programme.

3.5. THE SOUTH AFRICAN COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT PROGRAMMES

This section will discuss two examples of community empowerment programmes in South Africa, namely, the Local Economic Development and Community-Based Nutrition Programmes. The two were specifically selected as they share similar characteristics with the Community-Based Public Works Programme (CBPWP) which this study intends to evaluate.

3.5.1. LOCAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME

The Local Economic Development Programme (LED) is the brainchild of the National Government's "endeavours to promote sustainable economic growth and development, and human resource development, i.e. sustained growth and development from which all will benefit" (*Draft Economic Policy Document*, 1997:5). The programme is run by the Department of Local Government and Traditional Affairs of the Northern Province.

It has been realised that the Northern Province experiences high rate of poverty, unequal distribution of economic and social resources and is more backward as compared to other provinces. The Local Economic Development Programme is designed and implemented through other line government departments as a means to redress the problems mentioned above.

The *Draft Economic Policy Document* (1997:11) states the mission of the programme is "to stimulate, promote and maintain an enabling environment,

conducive to sustainable economic growth, social justice and a decent quality of life for all.” This will be possible only if the programme’s overall strategic thrusts were achieved.

The overall strategic thrusts for this programme are the following: small, medium, and micro enterprise development, increased value-added production and diversification, investment promotion, marketing, outward orientation and global competitiveness, labour-intensive production, sound spatial planning, regional integration, land reform, human resource development, transformation of government expenditure and empowerment.

The eleven target areas of the Local Economic Development Programme will be briefly discussed.

3.5.1.1. THRUSTS OF THE LOCAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME

*** SMALL, MEDIUM AND MICRO ENTERPRISE DEVELOPMENT**

The first thrust to be discussed is the small, medium and micro enterprises, which is abbreviated as SMME’s.

The development and support of the SMME’s by the provincial government ensures “a vehicle to address the challenges of job creation, economic growth and equity in the province” (*Draft Economic Policy Document*, 1997:24). The development and support of the SMME’s within the Northern Province makes it viable for those who are marginalized to obtain employment, and have a share in the South African economy.

*** INCREASED VALUE-ADDED PRODUCTION AND DIVERSIFICATION.**

The skewed exchange of goods between rural and urban areas should be reversed as it exposes the former to continued backwardness.

Instead of the rural areas to purchase processed raw material goods from the urban areas, they should have industries to manufacture their own products. This process will increase employment opportunities in the rural communities.

* **INVESTMENT PROMOTION, MARKETING, OUTWARD ORIENTATION AND GLOBAL COMPETITIVENESS.**

In order for communities to compete with the global market, they should be provided with skills, knowledge and attitudes. The government, especially the Northern Province Government, should “design and support a solid investment package which will attract foreign and local investors alike” (*Draft Economic Policy Document, 1997:26*).

* **LABOUR -INTENSIVE PRODUCTION**

This objective is favoured over many others as it increases employment opportunities within communities.

The Provincial Government should consider selecting projects and tenders that utilise the labour- intensive methods of construction in their business plans.

* **SOUND SPATIAL PLANNING**

The local government should identify certain areas within the Northern Province which are densely populated, and develop the “development corridors” in them in order to attract both local and overseas investments to develop such areas.

* **REGIONAL INTEGRATION**

The Northern Province as a crime-free environment, should maintain this *status-quo* and continue to attract other regions and foreign investors. This

will increase employment opportunities and business ventures for local communities.

* **LAND REFORM**

Land was historically unevenly distributed along the racial lines. Local governments within the Northern Province should assist local communities with the land claims, small-scale farming and land redistribution programmes.

* **HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT**

The Provincial Government is responsible for the development of programmes directed at human resource development. These programmes include the adult basic education and training (ABET), in-service training, technical and skills training, vocational and career counselling, designing and development of appropriate curricula, the establishment of an education and training institution directory within the province and technological development.

* **TRANSFORMATION OF THE GOVERNMENT**

According to De Villiers (1992:2), South African public service standards are dwindling and in order to save it from decline, government should implement the "*Batho-pele*" strategies. Through this principle, "standards are set, performance evaluated against these standards and remedial action taken to maintain the standards or improve existing performances and output" (De Villiers, 1992:2). Government functions and responsibilities should therefore be decentralised to those at the grassroots level.

* **REDIRECTION OF GOVERNMENT EXPENDITURE**

Instead of the Provincial Government channelling most of its expenditure towards the wages and salaries of government officials, expenditures should mostly be directed towards the developmental projects.

* **EMPOWERMENT**

The Northern Province is mostly rural and therefore most of its communities do not enjoy the amenities that are enjoyed in other parts of the country. There is a need to empower most communities in the province. "Empowerment means that disadvantaged people will be put in a position to take part in the mainstream economic and social activities of the province and the country as a whole" (*Draft Economic Policy Document*, 1997:34). Empowerment entails that communities tend to be exposed to education and training, they should acquire knowledge and skills necessary for employment, and they should be afforded the opportunity to fully participate in matters that affect them.

The Local Economic Development Programme has important properties of community empowerment, namely; self-reliance, the human resources development, strong community participation, and the labour-intensive methods of construction.

The second example of South African community empowerment programme is called the Community-Based Nutrition Programme.

3.5.2. COMMUNITY - BASED NUTRITION PROGRAMME

The Department of Health and Welfare has introduced a Community-Based Nutrition Programme (CBNP) which is geared at improving the nutritional status of communities, especially those in the rural areas.

According to the *Principles Guiding the Implementation of the Integrated Nutrition Programme* (1996:3), Community - Based Nutrition Programmes are "programmes that are area - based nutrition programmes developed through facilitated participatory nutrition programming process of assessment, analysis and action cycles to empower communities with the necessary skills

and knowledge to become self - reliant with regard to their food and nutrition needs and to control their nutritional well-being.”

This can be made possible by the active involvement of communities in their own impact analysis and then take action in addressing prevailing imbalances. CBNP is a programme that has the opportunity for community participation.

Community involvement and participation is important for as Lombard (1991:75) says, “when people find a community they find that they have greater power over their own lives and that they are easily empowered through their active participation in their community- based projects.”

As its name indicates, CBNP has to be community owned and as such communities should be actively involved in the planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of their projects. Projects of this nature are facilitated by professionals who make certain that the programmes are sustainable, income - generating, cost effective, accountable and capacity building and empowering on the part of communities.

Before community-based projects kick-start, their participants are provided with training. Training is defined as “a process of reducing or eliminating the gap between actual performance and what is needed in order to achieve optimum productivity. It is concerned with increasing the capabilities of individuals for doing a particular job or activity” (*Principles Guiding the Implementation of the Integrated Nutrition Programme*, 1996:29). Community members who participate in the CBNP projects receive basic knowledge, skill, and techniques required for performing certain tasks, and health systems training. Project steering committee members need training on bookkeeping, compilation of project proposals and business plans, procurement procedures, financial reporting and planning and management of projects.

Principles Guiding the Implementation of the Integrated Nutrition Programme, (1996:5) listed the aims of the Community - Based Nutrition Programme as;

- * Improve household food security.
- * Support small and medium enterprises.
- * Improve the health and educational qualities of primary school children through primary school nutrition activities.
- * Promote and support all the health and welfare services and programmes that are aimed at improving women and children care.
- * Promote and support programmes that are aimed at improving environmental health.
- * Ensure comprehensive nutrition care.
- * To contribute to social security and the rehabilitation of those identified as undernourished by rendering short - term food assistance to them.

CBNP is run by communities themselves. In order for communities to qualify for CBNP funding, the Department of Health and Welfare makes sure that their projects are income generating and empowering to the communities. This ensures sustainability of the programme. *Principles Guiding the Implementation of the Intergrated Nutrition Programme* (1996 :10) reiterates that “ the funds for CBNP should be directed to projects which empower vulnerable communities, targeting mainly women and children as beneficiaries and active participants in the projects.”

The CBNP through its assessment, analysis and action cycles addresses important components of community empowerment, namely; strong community participation, human resources development, and self-reliance, but unfortunately it is of a small scale and of a short-term nature.

3.6. CHARACTERISTICS OF THE COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT PROGRAMMES IN THE SOUTH AFRICAN COMMUNITIES

From the discussions of the Local Economic Development Programme and the Community-Based Nutrition Programme above, the researcher was able to identify the following characteristics associated with the empowerment programmes in the South African communities:

- * Most programmes are funded by the government departments.
- * Communities receiving funding do not practice the leveraging method.
- * Programmes are of a short-term nature.
- * Programmes do not alleviate unemployment and poverty in the communities.
- * Most programmes are still in the planning phase, and if they are in the implementation phase, they have not as yet improved the conditions of the communities.
- * Programmes rely on continued funding by government and as a result they are not sustainable.
- * The community empowerment approach is utilised in most sectors of community development in South Africa.

3.7. CONCLUSION

This chapter was about the examples and characteristics of community empowerment programmes, both in the United States of America and in South Africa.

International examples, the Rural Community Revitalization Project (RCRP) and the Black Community Developers Program (BCD) were discussed and marked by proper developmental strategies.

Horton's (1992) study of the BOA model of community empowerment revealed five principles, namely; economically autonomous black institution, internally developed and controlled data sources, emphasis on black history and culture, the development and incorporation of females in leadership roles and socially inclusive leadership.

Characteristics of the American community empowerment programmes were also briefly discussed.

The South African programmes on the other hand, the Local Economic Development and the Community- Based Nutrition (CBNP) Programmes are marked by a high incidence of dependency on state funding and lack of sustainability.

As the goal of this study is to evaluate the impact of the CBPWP on rural communities, this study shall therefore in the next chapter discuss both the programme evaluation research and the CBPWP in detail.