

# Role of Civil Society in the Implementation of Poverty Alleviation Programmes

A case for social development in South Africa

**J O Kuye**

School of Public Management and Administration  
University of Pretoria  
South Africa

**N V Nhlapo**

School of Public Management and Administration  
University of Pretoria  
South Africa

## ABSTRACT

*Participation of civil society in the implementation of public policy has been a consistent thrust of the transformation agenda of the South African democratic government. The whole thrust has been that people need to participate in their own development and take ownership of the process. A vibrant and diverse civil society is, therefore, important in consolidating and sustaining democracy as well as in holding government accountable. This article evaluates the extent to which programmes implemented by civil society, particularly in partnership with social development, are empowering and sustainable. Poverty alleviation has been a concern of all governments globally. As such governments have developed and implemented various public policies as a way to address the plight of poverty. The continued challenge of poverty in South Africa raises questions on the quality of participation of various actors in the policy process, the implementation of public policy and the approaches used. The high levels of poverty further calls for the evaluation of the extent to which strategies and programmes aimed at addressing poverty are sustainable in order to achieve long-term benefits and remove the poorest of the poor from the cycle of poverty. The findings of this study indicate that programmes implemented by civil society organisations (CSOs) are still far from being sustainable given the capacity challenges, limited funding and lack of vision on how to mobilise resources for the future. If South Africa has to meet the Millennium Development Goal (MDG) target of halving poverty by 2014, then this*

***research points to a rethinking in the involvement and participation of CSOs in poverty alleviation. It calls for a paradigm shift that is completely non-bureaucratic, allowing the development of systems for capacity building and funding that will allow CSOs to participate effectively in the implementation of programmes.***

## INTRODUCTION

The dawn of the new South Africa in 1994 brought hope to South Africans, especially those who were previously disadvantaged. This new expectation was highlighted by the commitment of government to a single vision of creating a people-centred society and a better life for all as expressed in its Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP). The major goals of the Reconstruction and Development Programme, among others, were to eliminate poverty and inequalities generated by decades of apartheid and to raise living standards. These goals were based on six basic principles, which, among others, include an integrated and sustainable programme and a people-driven process. The integrated and sustainable programme on the one hand emphasised that the legacy of apartheid cannot be overcome with piecemeal and uncoordinated policies, but rather with coherent, purposeful and sustained strategies implemented in all three government spheres, parastatals and organisations within civil society. It is for this reason that, since the adoption of the RDP as a policy to spearhead the transformation agenda in South Africa, the South African government, has remained firmly committed to its vision of a better life for all. This requires extensive involvement not only in implementing international and national policies, but also in spearheading the formation of such policies. A people-driven process emphasised a focus on people's most immediate needs addressed through approaches driven by people themselves. These two key principles are important in evaluating strategies and programmes implemented to alleviate poverty in South Africa, hence the importance of this study to evaluate the role of civil society organisations in the implementation of poverty alleviation programmes. In particular, the study evaluates how civil society organisations involve and empower communities in the implementation of their programmes and the extent to which these programmes are sustainable. It is evidenced in the study that civil society organisations have an important role to play in partnership with government in alleviating poverty. The importance of the involvement and participation of communities in their own development is crucial to any democratic society. It is the cornerstone of governance. This research attempts to understand the process followed by CSOs in the implementation of poverty alleviation programmes with a view to add value in addressing challenges experienced by these organisations and thus creating a long-lasting impact of poverty alleviation programmes. The study builds on the work that has been done in understanding the role of civil society in implementing public policy and particularly how they can contribute to poverty alleviation in South Africa.

Since the political transition in 1994, public policies to address South Africa's inequalities and poverty have been pursued through a number of policies and legislative initiatives. However, the government's ability to address social problems has been constrained by its



commitment both to implement strict fiscal policies and to pursue structural economic reforms, which inevitably have short-term social costs. Further, the implementation of government policies has been negatively affected by the lack of capacity and involvement of communities in the local sphere. Although government has committed itself to working in partnership with civil society in implementing its policies, this study indicates that this has not been as effective as expected. Thus the central objective of this study is to determine and evaluate the causes of ineffectiveness of poverty alleviation programmes by civil society in partnership with government.

The Department of Social Development is mandated to address poverty and development by implementing its policies in partnership with CSOs. As a result civil society has played a significant role in implementing various poverty alleviation programmes that were intended to be developmental by nature. Frimpong (2000:9) states that development projects combine the delivery of the project outputs with the mobilisation of local people to take advantage of their own development. Projects of this nature focus on *softer* outputs, i.e. capacity building and empowerment of involved community members, and sustainability through a participative and social learning through the management of projects (Bryant & White1982; Brinkerhoff 1991).

## **POLICY-PARADIGM SHIFT IN SOUTH AFRICA'S POST APARTHEID DEMOCRACY**

Ideologies play a significant role in determining values that should not just influence what policies to be made but also what processes to be followed in policy making and who the actors should be in the policy making process. The ushering in of democracy in 1994 changed the top-down style of decision-making which characterised the policy process in the past. The impact of this paradigmatic change on the study and practice of public policy in this country is far reaching. Until 1990, successive governments followed a largely traditional, Western, industrial world, colonial policy approach, consisting of incremental policy changes controlled by Western political and bureaucratic elites and aimed at preserving as much of the *status quo* as possible (Cloete and Wissink 2000:90). The African National Congress (ANC) and the South African government recognised that addressing the developmental challenges facing the country – including growing the economy and reducing the high rates of poverty, inequality and unemployment as well as improving the livelihoods of South Africans –require a developmental state that is democratic and socially inclusive; a developmental state with the capacity to actively and purposefully intervene to achieve the aforementioned goals.

The adoption of the *Constitution of the Republic of South Africa*, 1996 marked a new beginning for South Africa. Its goal was to heal the divisions of the past, and build a society based on democratic values, social justice and fundamental human rights (1996:1). The Constitution's intentions were multifold – to base government on the will of the people; to ensure that every citizen was equally protected by the law; to improve the quality of life of all people; and free the potential of every individual. Chapter 2 of the Constitution (1996:6) provides for the Bill of Rights, which is a cornerstone of democracy in South Africa. The Bill of Rights enshrines the rights of all people in South Africa and affirms the democratic values

of human dignity, equality and freedom. Hence it is regarded as the most liberal Constitution in the world.

Chapters 3 and 10 of the Constitution (1996) make provision for an integrated, intersectoral, and co-operative approach to governance. These provisions commit all three spheres of government (national, provincial and local) to be transparent in policy-making and inclusive in its approach. The Constitution (1996) further emphasises a developmental approach underpinned by principles of co-operative governance and poverty eradication as an imperative. The developmental approach does not only characterise the democratic form of government, but also shifts the role of the state in addressing development and poverty. Fritz and Menocal (2007:533) argue that a developmental state exists when the state possesses the vision, leadership and capacity to bring about a positive transformation of society within a condensed period of time.

## **DEVELOPMENTAL STATE**

At its policy conference in June 2007 the African National Congress (ANC) endorsed a proposal for South Africa to become a developmental state. The original concept of a developmental state refers to a state which is interventionist in nature and which promotes socio-economic development.

The concept of the developmental state can be traced back to Friedrich List in 1885 when he contended that the less advanced nations first required artificial means to catch up with the advanced nations (Nzwei and Kuye 2007:198). This artificial means, they argue, views the state as an agent of development, taking up the mandate to accomplish economic development. Looking at this artificial means it can be argued that this characteristic of a developmental state reflects the traditional top-down technocratic forms of development approaches imposed on diverse local realities which often were unsustainable and resulted in failure. Van Dijk and Croucamp (2007:665) define the developmental state as a state where politics have assured that power, autonomy and capacity are centralised in order to achieve explicit developmental goals. They argue that the focus of the developmental state is to either direct or enable economic growth. This is evident in the case of South Africa where the state introduced the macro economic Growth Employment and Redistribution (GEAR) strategy in 1996 with the objectives of economic growth and full employment amongst others. This strategy was introduced following the Reconstruction and Development strategy which was also an economic strategy. It is clear that the transformation and development of the democratic South Africa was premised on economic performance.

Mkandawira (1998:2) argues that there is a problem in defining a developmental state simply from its economic performance – not all countries with positive growth rates are developmental states. This definition of the developmental state runs the risk of being tautological since evidence that the state is developmental is often drawn deductively from the performance of the state. Referring to Africa specifically, Mkandawira goes on to add that the definition of a developmental state is one whose ideological underpinnings are developmental and one that seriously attempts to deploy its administrative and political resources to the task of economic development. Chalmers Johnson, one of the main scholars of the Asian countries where developmental states arose, such as Japan, Taiwan, Singapore and South Korea,



perceive it as a state that is determined to influence the direction and pace of socio-economic development by directly intervening in the developmental process, rather than relying on the unco-ordinated influence of market forces in the allocation of resources. Nzwei and Kuye (2007) have identified six major components that define the developmental state:

- a determined developmental elite;
- relative autonomy;
- a powerful, competent and insulated bureaucracy;
- a weak and subordinate civil society;
- the effective management of non-state economic interest; and
- legitimacy and performance.

Zegeye and Maxted (2002:90) argue that South Africa is a developmental state that is not the classic interventionist, centrist state of the 1960s and 1970s with total control over resources and delivery. Neither is it the minimalist state of the 1970s and the 1980s, facilitating neo-liberal global interests through a default to market regulation of societal interests and needs. Rather, the developmental state strategically intervenes to make the society to balance policies of redress, equity and economic growth. The ANC (ANC Website – undated) in discussing State Property Relations and Social Transformation and the Developmental State provides a fundamental base and views on the role of a developmental state. The ANC notes that:

*The 'developmental state' is charged to utilize the resources it commands to ensure redistribution of wealth in the interest of the poor and disadvantaged. It should also pursue a regulatory framework that affords the state to intervene in a proactive manner to facilitating growth and redistribution. It strives to correct the balance between state ownership of productive forces and private ownership, guided by the prerogative of the strategic interest, efficiency, technology-transfer, affordability of service and narrow cost-benefit considerations*

Arguments about what the developmental state is and the role of the state in a South African context comes at a time when there are global attempts to achieve more efficient government. This change has been characterised by reshaping the boundaries and responsibilities of the state. Contemporary public administration is not just about efficiency, it also involves ideas of democratic participation, accountability and empowerment. Minogue, Polidano and Hulme (1998:13) argue that there is a constant tension between two main themes: making government efficient and keeping government accountable. There is a corresponding tension between the concept of people as consumers, in the context of relations between the state and the market; and the concept of people as citizens in the context of the relationship between the state and society. The influential model of new public management (NPM) promises to integrate these themes, linking efficiency and accountability. These principles of efficiency and accountability influence, to a greater extent, public policy implementation.

The debate about the need to develop an appropriate development paradigm with its requisite structures and systems has been the subject of public administration scholars, policy makers, managers and the consumers of services for many decades. The central question that has always been raised, according to Agere (2000:66), is the typology of quantity and quality of the relationship among various partners in the development process. The developmental approach, therefore, puts more emphasis on responsiveness, decentralisation, accountability

and public participation. Within the context of public participation, communities are encouraged to become active participants in the public policy process. Within the context of decentralisation it means the empowerment of the poor to direct the use of government resources. Many commentators agree that something akin to a paradigm shift has taken place in the last three decades with the older welfare assumptions about the state yielding to an entrepreneurial model of government and new public management driving out the devalued old public administration. Osborne and Gaebler (1992) summarised the entrepreneurial model in terms of the following ten principles:

- steer the ship, rather than row it;
- empower communities, rather than simply deliver services;
- encourage competition rather than monopoly;
- be mission driven rather than rule driven;
- fund outcomes rather than inputs;
- meet the needs of customers rather than the bureaucracy;
- concentrate on earning resources, not just spending;
- invest in prevention of problems rather than cure;
- decentralise authority; and
- solve problems by making use of the market place rather than by creating public programmes.

These principles influenced the transformation of public administration in South Africa post 1994. Minogue *et al.* (1998:33) however, indicate that the NPM model is comprehensive, but oriented more to the cost cutting, tax reducing concerns of Northern states than the Southern states. Clearly, it is a model which should not be inflexibly applied, but adapted to different administrative and political contexts. The empowerment of institutions of civil society is a fundamental aim of the government's approach to building national consensus; hence this study attempts to respond to the research question: *To what extent are the poverty alleviation programmes implemented by civil society organisations empowering and sustainable?*

## **POLICY ENVIRONMENT POST 1994**

It is important to consider some policies introduced in South Africa post 1994 which brought a paradigm shift in the public policy process and the role of the state in the transformation process. The period from 1994 to 1999, which marked the first five years of democracy in South Africa, was spent on significant institutional transformation while introducing new policies in line with the Constitution (1996). Of significance was the proliferation of White Papers (policies) during the period 1995-1997. Hence in the *White Paper on the Transformation of the Public Service* (WPTPS) (1995) the government of South Africa outlined a broad policy framework for transforming the South African public service in line with the following vision:

*The Government of National Unity is committed to continually improving the lives of the people of South Africa by a transformed public service which is representative, coherent, transparent, efficient, effective, accountable and responsive to the needs of all (WPTPS, 2.1).*



In pursuit of this vision, the Government developed the following mission statement:

*“The creation of a people centred and people driven public service which is characterized by equity, quality, timeousness and a strong code of ethics” (WPTPS 2.1)*

The vision and the mission statements were premised on a fundamental re-definition of the role of the state. This new role of the state indicates that the state must guide and facilitate development as opposed to directly managing it. States should focus less on direct substantive support for and the organisation of specific projects. The state should rather organise, facilitate and support the interface among public, private and community-based developmental initiatives (De Visser 2005:19). The call of a new state is also reflected by Van Dijk and Croucamp (2007:666) who contend that contemporary society, and the involvement of civil society in South Africa call for a state that is both democratic as well as developmental in both content and character. They maintain that the centrality of the state in nation-building and socio-economic development is reaffirmed, while also asserting participatory democracy and a culture of human rights as key features of the developmental state.

It can be argued therefore that the relationship between government and civil society, in a democratic South Africa is that which is premised on a partnership between them rather than the antagonistic relations that had prevailed in the past. Long term development requires a multi-stakeholder approach whereby different actors work together towards a well defined goal and bring together added value and strength of the individual actors. It is therefore within this context that the role of civil society becomes important in addressing poverty.

The *White Paper on Transformation of Public Service Delivery* (1997) brought a change in the way in which public services should be delivered. The change put the citizen as the centre of public service, emphasising how the citizens should be treated, ensuring that citizens access services and information. The policy emphasises the accountability to the public especially if the services are not provided according to the set standards; the clients must be given reasons. The policy further stresses that public services should be provided economically and efficiently in order to ensure that it expands the base of access to services without wastage of public resources. This change in the service delivery culture is underpinned by the eight *Batho Pele* (Putting People First) principles which are aligned to the constitutional ideals of:

- promoting and maintaining high standard of professional ethics;
- providing service impartially, fairly, equitably and without bias;
- utilising resources efficiently and effectively;
- responding to people’s needs – citizens are encouraged to participate in policy-making and rendering an accountable transparent and development-oriented public administration.

The mere existence of good policies does not automatically result in successful implementation. Problems with policies often lay in the implementation thereof thus resulting in what Brynard (2007:357) calls the policy gap. Despite the development of this policy framework to transform service delivery, South Africa is still confronted with challenges of service delivery. Another policy that brought change in the new democratic South Africa is the *Non-Profit Organisations Act, 71 of 1997*. This Act clearly defines a non-

profit organisation (NPO) and establishes a clear role for the non-profit sector in governance and service delivery.

The case for some form of complementarity and partnership between the state and civil society organisations in service delivery, particularly in poverty alleviation and development is widely accepted. Minogue *et al.* (1988:95) contend that the potential for developing closer and more enduring forms of inter-institutional collaboration is founded on the creation of mutually reinforcing relationships between government and local citizens in the form of synergy. It is argued that the efficacy of public-civic collaboration in any given society depends on the extent of structural inequality, the nature of the political regime and their legal framework governing the voluntary sector on the one hand and institutional character and capacity of the civic and public realms on the other.

The NPO Act (1997) permits the registration of a whole range of NPOs established prior to the Act, including voluntary associations recognised by common law and not required to register with any authority. It provides clear accountability and governance measures for the non-profit sector. A study conducted by the Department of Social Development on the implementation of the NPO Act indicates that there have been gaps in the implementation of the Act particularly the non-compliance of non-profit organisations to the Act and the broader challenges on governance issues by the non-profit sector.

In 1997 *The White Paper for Social Welfare* (1997) was introduced and aimed at poverty eradication, based on social development. The policy approach is indicated in the mission of the White Paper for Social Welfare (1997:15) whose goal is: "To serve and build a self-reliant nation in partnerships with all stakeholders through an integrated social welfare system, which maximizes its existing potential, and which is equitable, sustainable, accessible, people-centred and developmental".

From this mission, it is clear that the *White Paper for Social Welfare* (1997) emphasises a transformation agenda of social development. This transformation agenda is based on the notion that people are the masters of their own destiny. The former Minister of Social Development advocated the development and empowerment of individuals, groups and communities. He stated that this is the best way for the department and its partners to combat the socio-economic challenges facing the country (Skweyiya: 2005 foreword). The White Paper is based on the following principles:

- creation of self-reliant communities as opposed to dependent communities;
- building partnerships with various stakeholders instead of a paternalistic approach in addressing the needs of the people;
- integrated system instead of a fragmented approach to development;
- equity;
- sustainability as opposed to short-term approach;
- accessibility;
- people-centeredness; and
- developmental.

A notable feature of the *White Paper on Social Welfare* is its shift to developmental social welfare, which, as indicated in the above principles, emphasises helping people to help themselves and thereby becoming self-reliant in contrast to a concept of welfare as *handouts*. These principles, including the values and principles of RDP, the Constitution, as well as the





commitments of the World Summit for Social Development held in Copenhagen in 1995, became critical in making policy decisions and in developing programmes to pursue the government's transformation agenda.

A major milestone in 1998 was the formation of the National Development Agency through the *National Development Act*, 108 of 1998). The primary object of the NDA was to contribute towards the eradication of poverty and its causes by granting funds to civil society organisations for the purposes of carrying out programmes and projects aimed at meeting development needs of poor communities, and strengthening the institutional capacity of other CSOs involved in direct service provision to poor communities. This was a significant step in addressing poverty at grassroots level. The creation of an institution with special focus on civil society organisations in democracy in South Africa was an indication that the new democratic form of government was serious about partnerships and collaboration with civil society in the public policy making process. This further reflected transformation and change in the way in which civil society organisations were viewed during the previous regime.

It is clear that policy development in the first five years of democracy in South Africa created a basis for the transformation agenda in the delivery of services and improving the lives of the people of South Africa, particularly those who were previously denied access to such services. Bohlmann, Du Toit, Gupta and Schoeman (2007:1) assert that policy-making in South Africa has to find a new paradigm – one where employment creation and resultant poverty alleviation are not merely accepted as a by-product of economic growth, but where employment creation is viewed as a key accelerator of economic growth. Social development targeted at mobilising and empowering the unemployed should constitute the backbone of any growth, employment and redistribution policy.

The focus should be on designing and implementing policies that truly empower and mobilise this untapped potential of society towards spurring higher levels of future economic growth rather than merely awarding handouts. In reviewing the implementation of a number of policies including policies aimed at alleviating poverty, it seems South Africa, like other developmental countries has experienced challenges.

## **POLICY IMPLEMENTATION**

The challenge of delivering services aimed at alleviating poverty to South Africa's previously disadvantaged communities remains the central challenge of the post-apartheid democratic government of South Africa. The intention of public policy is to provide benefits to citizens. Policy makers take decisions to improve the well-being of its citizens. These policies are not self executing but require effective implementation to ensure that policy makers' decisions are carried out successfully. Cloete and Wissink (2000:118) argue that no government policy over time is ever complete in terms of its outcomes or effect on society. This is mainly due to the continually developmental and changing nature of the needs of the people as the beneficiaries of public policy.

The study of policy implementation is crucial for the study of public administration and public policy. Policy implementation is the stage between policy making, the establishment of a policy and the consequences of the policy for the people whom it affects. Hill (1997:129) defines the implementation process as those actions by public or private individuals (or

groups) that are directed at the achievement of objectives set forth in prior policy decisions. In a similar vein Pressman and Wildavsky state: a verb like *implement* must have an object like policy (1973: xiv). The pioneering implementation studies argue that the process of putting policy into action is deserving of study, and that it is wrong to take it for granted that this process will be smooth and straightforward. Indeed, in many ways these studies are concerned with the discovery that many things may go wrong between policy formulation and output.

Policy implementation as a step in the policy process should not be thought of in mechanistic terms such as the view that politicians make policy and that officials merely implement such policy. Policy making is a continuous and interactive process that goes hand in hand with policy implementation. It requires co-operative partnership between politicians and officials who ideally, should always consider the practical implications of any policy that is implemented. Such interaction is best seen in the development and formulation of executive policy at the practical implementation level, bearing in mind its implications for society as a whole. Policy implementation is linked to the realities of a specific and ever-changing environment.

There are two approaches that can be used in policy implementation – the traditional top-down approach and the bottom-up approach. Brynard (2007:358) differentiates between inductive and deductive policy implementation. He regards top-down implementation as inductive and based more on predictions whilst bottom-up policy implementation is regarded as deductive and encourages a more generalised, explanatory role. The strengths and weaknesses of the top-down and the bottom-up approaches have led to researchers combining the benefits of these two approaches into one model or synthesis that can address both the structuring of policy from the top and the likelihood of its subversion or at least its alteration at the ultimate point of implementation. This approach allows for changing some aspects which create problems during the implementation. In looking at the various approaches to policy implementation it can be deduced that some of the problems related to policy implementation can be attributed to the weaknesses of these approaches. Brynard (2007:359-360) indicates the following problems with policy implementation. The complexities of policy development could be one reason for the failure of implementation. However, in developing countries the failure of policy can largely be attributed to issues of poor implementation. This has been the biggest challenge that has affected South Africa, despite good policies developed during the first five years of its democracy. In supporting this view Brynard (2007:359) argues that the *White Paper on Transforming Public Service Delivery* developed in 1997 to address the challenges of service delivery failed to achieve its purpose, hence service delivery in South Africa still remains the challenge. A myriad of policies to address poverty were developed since the emergence of democracy in South Africa. However, it still remains the biggest challenge facing the South African government. Hence this study explains how civil society organisations implement poverty alleviation programmes. What challenges do they experience? What is the effect of these challenges on the realisation of the objectives of the programme or goals of the policy?

Khosa (2000:49) notes that the discrepancies between policy and implementation are largely caused by unrealistic policies and a lack of managerial expertise. Another key finding Khosa contends, is that policy implementation has suffered from the absence of a people driven process. Insufficient co-ordination of policy implementation is cited in virtually

all sectors and has significantly hampered the implementation of policies. In addition, insufficient staffing and capacity of all three spheres of government as well as the linkages between them, have largely worked against the successful implementation of policies. Other problems associated with policy implementation include ambitious targets which fall short of their desired outcomes. The lack of reliable data often hampers policy makers' ability to devise clear policy goals with well defined implementation plans and evaluation mechanisms. Political commitment could be another problem. In this regard, Brynand (2007:360) contends that leadership and political commitment are critical for the success of policy. Finally financial and technical resources, along with the quality of human resources, are key factors that contribute to successful policy implementation.

## **ROLE OF CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANISATIONS**

Civil society is a crucial entity in the conceptualisation of democratic society. The strengthening of a vibrant civil society may be seen as a critical component towards preventing government statism, which is characterised by the centralisation of power and delinked public participation (Dangor 1994:16). What makes civil society significant globally and in Africa specifically, are the multiple functions they perform. Schmitter (1991:16) cites the following functions of the civil society organisations: They seek to promote not only their socio-economic interests, but also to define the rules for settling conflicting claims and interests in ways that are beneficial to themselves and society in general. Equally important, they endeavour to influence public policy-making and its implementation through a variety of formal and informal channels, including lobbying.

As many social scientists have observed, historical and contemporary evidence strongly suggest that transition to the pluralist type of civil society is one of the critical factors facilitating the pluralist democracy and its consolidation. In South Africa the emergence of political democracy based on the popular will has opened new vistas of opportunity for civil society to make a meaningful contribution to the development of South African society, particularly in the local government sphere. This has been evident in the emergence of a host of local development forums and community development forums, which were intended to be included in state structures for delivering development programmes. The establishment of a constitutional democracy therefore has created some necessary conditions for the emergence of a strong civil society.

Based on the in-depth data analysis of one hundred CSOs representing four provinces – Free State, Gauteng, KwaZulu-Natal and Limpopo some conclusions can be drawn. The CSOs with diverse roles and functions are the best guarantees for consolidating democracy in South Africa. This also presents a challenge whether or not CSOs have sufficiently understood and engaged with the shifts in their roles since democracy. Findings of this research lead to the drawing of conclusions with regard to the role of CSOs in poverty alleviation, particularly with regard to factors like empowerment, participative governance, capacity of CSOs, funding, accountability and sustainability. CSOs regard the involvement and participation of communities in their development as important. Hence they involve communities in a range of activities like the design and implementation of programmes, including the identification of needs and beneficiaries and fundraising. The involvement of communities in the implementation of

programmes seems to combine delivery of the project outputs with the mobilisation of local people to take advantage of their own development. In so doing, communities as beneficiaries of programmes are empowered to take decisions and participate fully in addressing challenges. Khosa (2000:3) argues that, at the heart of any service delivery programme there should be a deliberate effort to empower relevant beneficiaries.

Furthermore, the strategic location and proximity of CSOs to the communities they serve increases their credibility within the communities. This contributes to giving assurance to the community that they will always be able to count on their work to make life better for them. It can be concluded therefore that CSOs are participative and consultative in the way in which they implement the programmes affecting them.

Sustainability as indicated by Trzyna (1995:17) "is not a technical problem to be solved, but a vision of the future that provides us with a road map and helps to focus our attention on a set of values and ethical and moral principles by which to guide our actions". Looking at the values cited by CSOs as crucial in the implementation of poverty alleviation programmes, it can be argued that the values that guide the implementation of programmes by CSOs are aligned to the constitutional ideals aimed at transforming public administration. This is reflected in the values like a high standard of professionalism, excellence, respect and, most importantly, Batho Pele (Putting People First) principles, which were cited by CSOs as important in guiding their service delivery.

One of the main implementation challenges cited by CSOs is the mobilisation and allocation of resources. It appears that funding is also the biggest challenge experienced by CSOs. This challenge is exacerbated by government processes that delay funding in some instances as revealed in this study. Although CSOs indicated some strategies and plans to mobilise and raise funds, it is doubtful whether those strategies could ensure sustainability of their programmes in the future. Looking at their nature, for example, some organisations indicated bank loans as a way of mobilising funds. Understanding that because of the economic meltdown, financial institutions are stricter in lending money, this raises serious doubts.

Financial management also seems to be a challenge, given huge under-spending reflected by CSOs in the three-year period. There could be significant gains to be reaped, particularly in ensuring sustainability of programmes if CSOs in their planning processes could ensure that they develop strategies for fundraising instead of having *ad hoc* fundraising. CSOs do not seem to be reporting annually despite this being a requirement in terms of accountability, especially for funds received from government. The NPO Act, 1997 also requires as part of governance that NPOs report annually on how they have utilized their funds. It can be concluded that NPOs are not complying with either the *NPO Act, 1997* or the *Public Finance Management Act, 1999*. This could be attributed to the management capacity in terms of managing finance and also reporting skills.

Some of the main constraints to effective functioning of civil society organisations that also seem to impact negatively on their sustainability include poor managerial, administrative and business skills in a local sphere, and inability to access and manage funding. It has become clear that there is a great need for strengthening the organisational and administrative capacity of CSOs. It is generally accepted that local organisational capacity is recognised as prerequisites for developing effectiveness and the empowerment of the poor. The success and life of any organisation is measured by its appropriate capacity to deliver on its objectives. Appropriate capacity is the ability of people to work together, organise



themselves and mobilise resources to solve problems of common interest. It is about the ability to plan.

Furthermore, the use of volunteers as the majority of staff poses threats to the retention and quality of staff to deliver on programmes, given that most of the time volunteers do not have the requisite skills and time has to be set aside for training and capacitating them. Although projects that involve community volunteers are initially effective, there are concerns, about the longer term sustainability. There seems to be a lack of incentives for CSOs to continue with activities, particularly where they are reliant on voluntary inputs from its members.

The lack of participation of CSOs in the municipality's Integrated Development Plan is a gap in advancing integrated development to address the challenges facing the communities. Given the role of local government of reducing historical socio-economic backlogs through the acceleration of service delivery to local disadvantaged communities, it is critical that both CSOs and local government partner and collaborate in bringing a better life to communities. A strong synergetic partnership between government and CSOs and other actors in the implementation of poverty alleviation need to be galvanised to rectify associated inefficiencies as indicated by Vyas-Doorgapersad and Muller (2006:1).

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

CSOs have a critical role to play in poverty alleviation, particularly in closing the gaps left by the form government in poor communities. This study has revealed a number of challenges that are experienced by CSOs in implementing poverty alleviation. If government is serious about the role of CSOs in poverty alleviation, it must therefore consider changing its approach in this partnership.

### **The funding of CSOs**

The South African government, both in the provincial and local sphere must commit much greater financial resources for the effective implementation of poverty alleviation programmes by CSOs. The resources will go a long way in ensuring financial sustainability and creating an enabling environment for effective implementation. In addressing disparity in the funding of CSOs by various government departments, the Department of Social Development should develop policy and funding models to guide the funding of CSOs across the public sector. This will make it easier for CSOs to access funds and will guarantee services in the local sphere, thus ensuring financial and organisational sustainability. Government should enhance and streamline its processes to ensure that funding is channelled to CSOs at an appropriate time – these processes must include streamlining prefunding conditions, approval processes, transfer of funds and monitoring of implementation of programmes.

### **Capacity Building of CSOs**

The Department of Social Development, together with the National Development Agency, should develop and implement a capacity-building framework for CSOs. The capacity-building framework should address the following areas: organisational and administrative

skills, as well as mentoring and coaching to ensure continuous learning. The Department of Social Development in partnership with NDA should further develop simple reporting formats that will encourage regular reporting by CSOs. The NDA should train and guide CSOs on the writing of reports which are critical as part of accountability and good governance.

## CONCLUSION

CSOs are increasingly playing an important role in poverty alleviation. It can be concluded that the role of civil society organisations is gaining ground in the implementation of poverty alleviation programmes. However, there is a need to strengthen partnership and collaboration between this institution and government in all spheres. This partnership and collaboration will facilitate the participation of CSOs in various mechanisms and processes including integrated development plans to ensure effective implementation of poverty alleviation programmes. Government should therefore commit adequate resources for effective implementation of poverty alleviation programmes. Unless this partnership is nurtured and maintained, poverty will continue to be a challenge in South Africa and South Africa will miss the target of halving poverty by 2014.

## REFERENCES

- Agere, S. 2000. *Promoting Good Governance. Principles, Practices and Perspectives*. London: Commonwealth Secretariat.
- Adekola, G. and Olajide, O.E. 2005. Impact of Government Poverty Alleviation Programmes on Socio-Economic Status of Youths in Ibadan Metropolis, NIGERIA. *IFE Psychology IA*, pp.124–131.
- Aliber, Michael. 2002. *Overview of the Incidence of Poverty in South Africa for the 10 Year Review*. South Africa: Human Science Research Council.
- African National Congress. 1994. *The Reconstruction and Development Programme a policy Framework*. Johannesburg, South Africa: Umanyano Publications.
- African National Congress. 2008. *Introduction to the Reconstruction and Development Programme*. Quick Index site index documents publications, pp.1–26, 1–19 and 1–6.
- Anderson, James E. 2003. 5<sup>th</sup> ed. *Public Policy Making*. Houghton: Mifflin Co. USA.
- Becker, S. and Bryman, A. 2004. *Understanding Research for Social Policy and Practice. Themes, methods and approaches*. UK: The Policy Press.
- Auditor-General South Africa. 2009. *Report of the Auditor-General to Parliament on a performance audit of projects that are funded by the National Development Agency*
- Belshaw, D., Calderisi, R. and Sugden, C. 2001. *Faith in Development Partnership between the World Bank and the Churches of Africa*. Oxford: Regnum Books International.
- Birkland, Thomas A. 2005. *An Introduction to the Policy Process Theories, Concepts and Models of Public policy making*. M.E. Sharpe. USA.
- Bohlmann, H.R., Du Toit, C.B., Gupta, R. and Schoeman, N.J. Integrated Social Development as the Accelerator of Shared Growth. *Focus on key economic issues*, No. 55 March University of Pretoria.
- Brinkerhoff, D. 1991. *Improving Development Program Performance: Guidelines for Managers*, Boulder: Lyne Rienner.



- Bryant, C. and White, L.G. 1982. *Managing Development in the Third World*, Boulder, CO: Westview.
- Brynard, P.A. and Hanekom, S.X. 2006. *Introduction to research in management-related fields*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Pretoria: Van Schaik.
- Brynard, P.A. 2007. The Policy Gap in South Africa. *Journal of Public Administration*, 42(3).
- CIVICUS. 2004. Assessing and Strengthening Civil Society Worldwide, *CIVICUS Civil Society Index Paper Series*, 2(1):1.
- Civil Society. 2007. *Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia*, 1–4.
- Cloete, F., Wissink, H. and De Coning, C. 2006. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. *Improving Public Policy from Theory to Practice*. Pretoria: Van Schaik.
- Cornia, Giovanni Andrea. 2004. *Inequality, Growth and Poverty in an era of liberalization and globalization*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Dangor, Z.1994. *NGOs and government RDP partnership*. Matlhasedi Nov/Dec 15–18.
- De Visser, J.W. 2005. *Developmental Local Government. A case of South Africa*. Oxford, UK: Intersentia.
- Du Toit, D.F.P., Van der Waldt, G., Bayat, M.S. and Cheminais, J. 1998. *Public Administration and Management for Effective Governance*. Kenwyn: Juta.
- Dye, Thomas R. 1998. 9<sup>th</sup> ed. *Understanding Public Policy*. Prentice-Hall International (UK) Limited.
- Frimpong, Mensah. 2000. *Project Management for Non-Profit Organizations. A practical Guide for Managing Development Projects*.
- Fritz, V. and Menocal, R. 2007. Developmental States in the New Millennium: Concepts and Challenges for a New Aid Agenda. *Development Policy Review*, 25(5): 531–552.
- Hill, Michael. 1997. *The Policy Process in the Modern State*. London: Prentice-Hall.
- Ijeoma, E.O. 2009. Policy Dilemmas and Prospects towards meeting the Millennium Development Goals in Africa. *Journal of Public Administration*, 44(3.1) October.
- Khosa, M. 2000. *Empowerment through Service Delivery*. Pretoria: Human Science Research Council.
- Kotze, D.A. 1997. *Development administration and management*. A holistic approach. Pretoria: JL van Schaik.
- Minister Z.S.T. Skweyiya, 2005. *Foreword – Integrated Service Delivery Model*.
- Mkandawire, T.1998. Thinking about Developmental States in Africa. Paper presented at the UNU-AERI *Workshop on Institutional and Development Africa*. UNU Headquarters, Tokyo Japan October, pp 14–15.
- Minogue, M., Polidano. C. and Hulme, D. (eds.) 1998. *Beyond the New Public Management*. Edward Elgar Publishing Limited UK.
- Narayan, D. 2002. *Empowerment and Poverty alleviation: A sourcebook*. New York, the World Bank, USA.
- Nzwei O.I. and Kuye J.O. 2007. The Developmental State and Conceptual Interpolations: A Comparative Policy-Targeting for South Africa within a Global Context. *Journal of Public Administration*, 42(3) August:195–210.
- Osborne, D. and Gaebler, T. 1992. *Reinventing Government: How the Entrepreneurial spirit is transforming the Public Sector*. London: Plume.
- Pressman, T.L. and Wildasvsky, A. 1973. *Implementation*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Republic of South Africa. 1995. *The White Paper on the Transformation of the Public Service* (Notice 1227 of 1995). Pretoria: Government Printers.
- Republic of South Africa. 1996. *Constitution of the Republic of South Africa: Government Gazette Volume 378*. Cape Town: Government Printers.
- Republic of South Africa. 1997. *Nonprofit Organizations Act, 71 of 1997*. Republic of South Africa. Pretoria.
- Republic of South Africa. 1997. *White paper for Social Welfare, Ministry for Welfare and Population Development*. Pretoria: Department of Welfare.

- Republic of South Africa. 1997. *White Paper on Transforming Service Delivery 'Batho Pele'*. Pretoria. Government Printers.
- Republic of South Africa. 1998. *National Development Agency, Act No. 108 of 1998*. Cape Town: Government Printers
- Republic of South Africa. 1999. *Public Finance Management Act, 1 of 1999*. RSA: Pretoria.
- Republic of South Africa. 2005. *An Impact assessment of the NPO Act, 71 of 1997*. RSA, Pretoria.
- Republic of South Africa. 2008. *Department of Social Development's Strategic Plan 2008–2011*. Pretoria.
- Schmitter, P. 1991. *Society in the transition to democracy: proceedings of a workshop*. Washington DC: National Academy Press.
- Trzyna, T.C. 1995. *A Sustainable World. Defining and measuring sustainable development*. California: IUCN-The World Conservation Union.
- UN Millennium Declaration 2000. United Nations. New York.
- Van Dijk, H.G. and Croucamp, P.A. 2007. The Social Origins of the Developmental State: Reflections on South Africa and its Local Sphere of Government. *Journal of Public Administration*, 42(7) November:664-675.
- Vyas-Doorgapersad, S. and Muller, M. 2006. Partnership between Community Development and Government: A Tool towards Development. *1<sup>st</sup> Public Administration Conference 30/06/2006*; Conference Centre, University of Pretoria, RSA.
- Wilson, F., Kanji, N. and Braathen, E. 2001. *Poverty alleviation: what Role for the State in Today's Globalized Economy?* Cape Town: Zed Books pubs.
- Zegeye, A. and Maxted, J. 2002. *Our Dream deferred: The poor in South Africa*. Pretoria: South African History online & UNISA Press.

## **AUTHORS' CONTACT DETAILS**

Prof. J O Kuye  
E-mail: kuyej@up.ac.za

Prof. N V Nhlapo

