

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

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1.1 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

South Africa is entering a critical stage in her existence. Major forces are interacting on the social, political and economic front, changing the fabric of society. Aspiration levels among the developing segments of the population are rising fast and the available resources are concomitantly put under increasing pressure to satisfy these aspirations.

One such a group of basic aspirations concerns the provision of housing in the urban environment. With the abolishment of influx control as part of the gradual political reform process, the present housing backlog (estimated at about 634 000 units for black families in 1985 by the National Building Research Institute, and the associated undesirable social manifestations such as uncontrolled squatting, poor hygienic conditions, crime, etc., could become one of the major problems of the 1990's in South Africa, unless pro-active innovative action plans are implemented.

The economics of supplying housing can be daunting. On the financial side, few or no overseas loans are available, due to the international financial sanctions campaign. This means that demands must be made on the limited internal funds, competing with other demands such as education, defence, etc.

The actual supply of housing is also not as simple as it might seem at first glance. Firstly, land must be made available by the Government at low or no cost, (effectively redistributing wealth from taxpayers to new homeowners). Alternatively, private developers have to acquire land at market rates, increasing the final cost to the prospective homeowner. There are many and ingenious ways to supply physical housing to lower income groups, over and above the traditional brick/block contractor-built house. These include site-and-service schemes, shelter housing, shell housing and core housing.

The erection of dwellings in a new township or suburb, while a very visible operation, is however, only the tip of the iceberg. The provision of appropriate services is an important dimension of the housing problem, and one often overlooked in the discussion of this problem.

These services include the provision of roads, water supply, stormwater drainage, sewerage removal, electricity reticulation and house wiring, telecommunication infrastructure, etc. The importance of the costs associated with the provision of services is underlined by the fact that services could account for half the purchase price of a low-income house in some instances. (Escom 1991:41).

The supply of electrical infrastructure is an important component of the provision of services to a new township or suburb. Electricity in abundance has become commonplace in the developed sector. It has been accepted as a given and is even viewed as a right. People expect to be able to acquire and use any number and size of electrical appliances in their homes without problems.

When viewed in the context of the peculiar problems facing the developing sector, specifically in the light of the multitude of needs versus the economic constraints, the provision of electrical infrastructure clearly needs to be completely reevaluated. Electricity supply is not only competing with the provision of other services for each rand invested, but in many cases with the provision of land and actual dwellings as well.

Conceptually, two alternatives emerge: either retain electrical reticulation standards at developed sector standards and supply a small part of the developing sector backlog with electricity; or maximise the availability of electricity to as many people as possible.

1.2 MOTIVATION FOR THE RESEARCH

Preliminary research conducted by the author, in 1990, into the importance of electricity supply in South Africa, revealed

certain salient points. Several local researchers are active in the general field of energy supply to the developing sector of South Africa's population, both urban and rural. The specific subject of high benefits of electricity supply to cost has not been extensively researched and reported upon. The National Building Research Institute, produced a literature study which concluded that coal was the most important and cheapest source of energy for low income urban communities. (Escom 1991: 12).

The capital intensive nature of electricity supply resulted in high connection fees, resulting in many low income households opting not to connect to the grid even when electricity was available.

It was therefore decided, after consultation with academics, Town Council officials and Katlehong residents, to conduct a study in this complex field in South Africa, and to see if reasons could be found for making a number of relevant recommendations. The main aims of this study are:-

- (1) to investigate the implications of limited electricity supply to urban residential consumers.
- (2) to identify the correlation between electricity supply and the standard of living.
- (3) to identify the spillover effects of electricity supply.

1.3 METHODOLOGY

A theoretical study on related aspects of the urban electrification process was firstly undertaken and this included the basic needs approach, cost-benefit analysis and the economic impact of electrification in general. This was followed by an indepth discussion with various experts on electrification at both consulting and municipal/township level, to determine various practical aspects of limited electrification of the Katlehong township in particular.

Other organisations active in the subject field were also contacted. A survey of consumers in Katlehong township (Hlahatse, Phoko and Ramakonopi East section) was also undertaken to determine attitudes towards and perception of electricity in general and limited electrification in particular. The obtained data was analyzed, collated and integrated. A wide range of relevant publications, journals and newspapers were reviewed so as to comprehensively evaluate the topic in these regards. Additional discussions were held with number of persons in the township on an informal basis.

As Escom is responsible for supplying electricity in the township through town councils, it provided valuable data and comment and also disclosed important relevant information during a series of confidential discussions held in Megawatt Park during 1990.

The dissertation is divided into seven primary areas of analysis, forming the contents of chapters two to seven. Chapter two to four, provide a theoretical framework in various degrees, while chapter six analyses the application of cost-benefit analysis in South Africa and Katlehong in particular. The conclusions are reported on in chapter seven.

The study begins with an analysis of the basic needs approach in chapter three, as well as a critical evaluation of this approach, so as to provide a theoretical framework, in which to evaluate the importance of electricity supply. The following chapter deals with the applied theory of cost-benefit analysis. The origins and nature of the cost-benefit analysis, are identified and discussed in the first half of chapter four. The remainder of this chapter is devoted to the possible adjustment policies and mechanism of the approach which is further extended to chapter five which looks at the economic impact of electrification.

In evaluating the purposes and impact of electricity supply and the costs thereof, the specific theory of the dissertation is addressed. Chapter six therefore, forms the core of the theoretical analysis conducted. The main purpose of this chapter is to show how the expansion of electricity supply to various townships will affect the standard of living of the households. With the theoretical framework in place, chapter six conducts an analysis of the perceived electricity supply and try to reconcile the theory and practice with each other.

The final chapter of this dissertation, summarizes the main findings of the research, both theoretical and applied, and makes a number of relevant recommendations. Other pertinent areas covered during the course of the study, are summarized in terms of suggestions for further research, thereafter.

CHAPTER TWO

ELECTRIFICATION IN SOUTH AFRICA

2.1 ELECTRICITY SUPPLY IN SOUTH AFRICA

2.2 INEQUITABLE ACCESS BY THE POOR

2.3 IMPACT OF ELECTRICITY SUPPLY ON LIVING STANDARDS

2.1 ELECTRIFICATION IN SOUTH AFRICA

Electricity supply in South Africa is more than a hundred years old. In fact this country was one of the first in the world to use electricity. Initially, various generating authorities were formed and some of the mine municipalities generated their own power. The need for a central generating authority soon became evident and in 1923 a public utility, the Electricity Supply Commission, today known as Eskom was established.

In South Africa the vast distances between the metropolitan areas and the relatively low population density rural areas present unique problems for electricity supply. With millions of people moving to urban areas, traditional energy sources such as wood and coal have become inadequate. Moreover, electrification will play a major role in combating damage to the environment, which has become a serious problem in South Africa. The fact that people are moving into urban areas had led to the deforestation of large areas and unhealthy levels of pollution in urban areas.

Most of the Eskom's electricity is sold directly to the mines, heavy industry and the railway system i.e. about 63 per cent. The rest (37 per cent) is supplied in bulks to municipalities and neighbouring countries who resell the electricity to consumers in their own areas. It is estimated that industry uses 55 per cent of the electricity consumed in South Africa,

the mines 27 per cent, households 14 per cent and the railway system 4 per cent (Escom 1991: 36)

Only about thirteen million of South Africa's total population of 39 million have electricity in their homes. Many more, of course, are exposed to the use of electricity in their workplace (Gervais 1987:4). In urban areas the provision of the electricity is the responsibility of local authorities who buy electricity from Escom and resell it to end-users in their areas. Little progress has been made during the past few years in the provision of electricity to non-electrified urban areas. Major cities like Soweto, in the PWV area with between one and a half and two million inhabitants, still have very little access to electricity.

2.2 INEQUITABLE ACCESS BY THE POOR

Heavy public spending on rural infrastructure is often justified as a measure to help the poor. Incomes in rural areas are indeed lower on average than those in urban areas, but the range is wide.

Highly subsidized rural electrification does not mean that all village families have equal access to electricity. Findings from a survey of ninety villages in the TBVC states in 1991 indicate that about 15 per cent of the population was connected during the first few years of electrification and only 5 per cent after five years (Gervais 1987: 43).

The poorest often live far from the main electricity lines and can rarely afford to connect to them. Data for 1991 show that nearly 65 per cent of the highest income group in the TBVC area had electricity compared to 20 per cent of the lowest income group.

2.3 IMPACT OF ELECTRICITY SUPPLY ON LIVING STANDARDS

As a substitute for wood, paraffin, coal and candles, electricity reduces damage to the environment. By being available at the flick of a switch, electricity improves productivity because it allows users more time for constructive activities. Electricity for all will definitely enhance economic growth and prosperity.

Although electricity supply might appear as being a good business, the wider implication for stable community life are obvious. Taking Kwa-Nobuhle township in Uitenhage as an example, the quality of life has really improved (Escom 1991:100).

It is an area where residents have been asking for electricity for some years and the Volkswagen motor industry took the initiative and approached Escom for assistance in upgrading the quality of life of the residents. Escom has introduced a low cost pre-metering system which has an advantage in low income areas: it allows the consumer to control his own usage, which is crucial where you have great variations in affordability.

A householder might allocate his electricity to cooking, for example, and use candles for lighting or choose electric light and cook with coal. To give the consumer this degree of control over his personal life-style is of great importance.

This pre-paid metering system that has been installed in Kwa-Nobuhle is operated through inserting a coded card (purchased in advance rather like punched bus coupons). This method does away with the risk of theft: cards can't be stolen, and the card will not work in any other meter. The consumption will be shown on the meter by a series of coloured lights, with a distinctive warning light to indicate that the household is running 'on reserve'.

The locally developed meter incorporates an over-current and earth leakages relay, which eliminates the need for these devices on the customer's distribution board and hence effects an installation saving of about R160 per house. Reticulation costs that is, the price of bringing electricity into a home has greatly been reduced by up to 50 per cent (Escom 1991:139).

It is clear that electricity has a psychological impact on the residents with it. For the first time residents from Kwa-Nobuhle confirmed the idea that electricity creates a sense of personal identity - and with it, heightened the self-esteem. Electricity plays a general role in the development process.

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CHAPTER THREE

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3.1 INTRODUCTION

In most of the current international theory and writing on questions of economic development, a strong emphasis is placed on the assertion that everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and his family, including food, clothing, housing, medical care and necessary social services. A fundamental premise of this assertion is that an improvement in the living standard or the quality of life of the poor should be afforded priority in economic development. This implies that for most developing economies emphasis should be directed to combating the widespread poverty and inequalities and in shifting the distribution of resources in favour of the poor. The basic needs approach (BNA) to development presents some contributions to assist in combating these deficiencies. (Urbanization, 1980:128; Hopkins and Van der Hoeven, 1988:74).

The purpose of this chapter is to illustrate the extent to which electricity supply can be regarded as the most versatile and convenient energy source whilst at the same time being a key basic need. The BNA to development will be defined and elaborated on. Following this, the specific application of electricity supply in the provision of basic needs will be examined in the next chapter.

3.2 DEFINITIONAL ISSUES

In the last chapter, it was established that a clear distinction should be drawn between economic growth and economic development. Economic growth, for example, measures "... increases in an economy's output capacity over time, while economic development embraces the wider concept of the impact of economic growth on the living standards of all those living within an area" (Keeton, 1983:68). Furthermore it was pointed out that the dominant ideology of the 1950's and the 1960's viewed growth as inherently good and necessary in the interest of society, thereby "... creating more jobs, more income, more goods and services to be enjoyed" (Goldstein, 1985:596). This assertion, however, turned out to be wrong, and the first major move away from growth maximisation took the form of emphasis on employment as a development objective.

However, the complexity of employment problems in poor countries soon revealed this to be unsatisfactory. "While open unemployment and people working short hours constituted one aspect of the employment problem to which additional employment was an appropriate response, people working long hours with very low productivity and incomes constituted another significant element of the problem" (Stewart, 1985:10). By the mid- 1960's, policy emphasis had changed to a structuralist approach of Redistribution - with - growth.

This approach suggested that development efforts should be focused directly on raising the incomes of the poor, thereby facilitating greater self-support in future in these groups (Ahluwalia et al, 1974:24).

This approach recognised the need for urban industrial investment, but it acknowledged that the fruits of growth would not automatically filter down to the poorer sections and poorer areas of the economy. As a consequence, intervention through government policy was deemed necessary to boost the provision and distribute the benefits of economic growth more equitably throughout society.

In the early 1970's, the ideology of economic growth and the Redistribution - with - growth programme came under attack from several quarters. More precisely, it seemed "... unlikely that the growth strategy could be maintained while additional incomes were redistributed and investments relocated; in addition it was argued that in most societies, political opposition would prevent redistribution of the type advocated" (Stewart, 1985:11). Furthermore, evidence suggested that widespread poverty had not, in fact, disappeared and economic growth and Redistribution - with - growth programmes had "... widened the global gap between the industrial countries of the 'south'" (Streeten, 1979; Van Wyk, 1982; Goldstein, 1985).

The implication is that the poor continued to be impoverished and the gap between rich and poor became increasingly marked. As a result, basic human needs began to emerge as a new framework for looking at economic development.

While Redistribution - with - growth programmes emphasized the 'top down' approach, the basic needs approach is based on the 'bottom up' pattern and concentrates on programmes aimed at providing goods and services to the poor. In other words, it is synonymous with "... a grassroots approach to development in which the needs of the individual households and communities are of paramount importance " (Moller, 1985:68).

The basic needs approach (BNA) to development originated by planners working in the International Labour Organisation (ILO) and the World Bank is, however, seen as a natural progression from the Redistribution - with - growth school. In fact, "... it is a modification of, and not a radical departure from that school. It rests upon the view that the record of the Redistribution - with - growth approach is, when measured in terms of living conditions of the majority of people in developing countries, unsatisfactorily: the emphasis has been too much on growth and not enough on redistribution" (Dewar et al, 1981:31).

The BNA promotes economic development through fulfilling the basic needs of all people in a cost - effective manner and

within a specific time frame. Its major strength is its concern for people rather than other abstract systems. Put differently, the main purpose is "... not to develop things but to develop man. Human beings have basic needs ... [and] any process of growth that does not lead to their fulfilment or even worse disrupts them, is a travesty of the idea of development" (Ghai et al, 1979; Keeton, 1984:69). The BNA aims at eliminating absolute poverty on a permanent and sustainable basis. This is a broadening of the concept of development in the sense that it (the BNA) promotes the development of underprivileged areas, thereby enabling even the lowest income groups to enjoy a minimum standard of living. Appropriately, Reynolds (1981:13) maintains that this meeting of needs should be seen as a means of "... strengthening the hand of the poor, the women and rural as against urban dwellers, ... for he seeks to define an acceptable social order in which human fulfilment is possible". Slabbert (1984:22) interprets this description as a challenge to present day economic theory with regard to ignorance of the fundamental principle that the satisfaction of human needs is the foundation of economics.

The contention that the BNA is a logical step along the path of development thinking rests on the argument that it provides a key to the solution of a number of separate, but related problems. If basic needs "is made the starting point, these otherwise recalcitrant problems fall into place and become solvable" (Streeten et al, 1981:22).

Streeten (1979:30) and Slabbert (1984:18) assert that the aspects of urbanisation, protection of the environment, equality, the relation between rural development and industrialisation, rural-urban migration (urban directed); domination and dependence appear in a new light once the meeting of basic needs becomes the central concern in economic development. Nattrass (1980:58) points out that the BNA allows the peripheral states in Southern Africa to attack the problems of poverty, growing inequality and economic dependence on the South African centre with one policy package. Such an attack is facilitated through the creation of jobs since the BNA is both labour intensive and import replacing.

Of major importance is that jobs reduce the developing economies need to rely on the migrant labour system. At the same time, the output from jobs provides the necessities of life presently imported from the South African centre economy. Ghai et al (1977:6) argue that this expansion in domestic production levels opens up "... the possibility of autonomous self-sustained growth for the Third World which is currently ruled out by the dependent status." Other cases on the effectiveness of the BNA are those associated with the experience of developing economies such as Sri Lanka and the state of Kerala in India where at extremely low income levels, life expectancy, literacy and infant mortality have, in recent years, reached levels comparable to those in most advanced countries.

In his study on intergrated rural development programmes, Ruttan (1984:397) noted that in Sri Lanka, life expectancy at birth rose from 46 in 1945 - 1947 to 64 in 1973 - 1975; infant mortality declined from 182 to 65 per 1000 between 1945 - 1949 and 1965 - 1969; literacy increased from 68% in 1953 to 81% in 1969. These improvements were achieved in an economy in which per capita income was below 200 (1974-1976 US dollars).

More specifically, the advocates of the BNA contend that it represents a radical departure from conventional development approaches: "The evolution from growth as the principal performance criterion, via employment and redistribution to basic needs is an evolution from abstract to concrete objectives, from a preoccupation with means to a renewal awareness of ends and from a double negative (reducing unemployment, alleviating poverty or reducing inequality) to a positive (meeting basic needs)" (Streeten and Burki, 1979; Ruttan, 1984). The implication is that the above evolution has made it possible to define development thought in less abstract and more disaggregated, concrete and specific terms. Central to this development thinking is that the needs of the most deprived sectors of the population are afforded priority in order for them to live a decent life.

While a large spectrum of writers (Ghai, 1977; Streeten, 1979; Burki, 1980; Hicks, 1980; UL Hag, 1980; Keeton, 1984; Stewart, 1985 are prominent exponents) agree on the objectives of the

BNA, there is, however, much disagreement on its precise meaning and interpretation. Streeten et al (1981:8) assert that this concept has unfortunately "... evoked emotions that have little to do with the meaning that lies behind it". Accordingly, UL Hag (1980:135) writes that "... To some, the concept of providing for the basic needs of the poorest represents a futile attempt to redistribute income and provide welfare services for the poor without stimulating corresponding increases in their productivity to pay for them. To some, it conjures up the image of a move toward socialism and whispered references are made to the experience of China and Cuba. To others, it represents a capitalist conspiracy to deny industrialisation and modernisation to the developing countries and thereby to keep them dependent upon the development world. To still others, it is a pragmatic response to the urgent problem of absolute poverty in their midst". Le Roux (1985:6) adds that some radicals interpret the BNA as representative of policies of appeasement which are adopted to prevent any real change from taking place.

Despite these controversies regarding the BNA, the definition of basic needs include: First, certain minimum requirements of a family for private consumption: adequate food, shelter and clothing as well as certain household equipment and furniture.

Second, they include essential services provided by and for the community at large such as safe drinking water, sanitation, public transport and health, educational and cultural facilities. A basic needs - oriented policy implies the participation of the people in making decisions which affect them through organisations of their own choice. In all countries, freely chosen employment enters into basic needs policy, both as a means and an end" (ILO, 1976:191).

The above description includes both material and non-material needs. More precisely, the list contains a number of components of basic needs that are publicly provided services, though not necessarily public goods. This can be aligned with the aim of the BNA, which, according to Lal (1984:100) is to expand the supply of these basic services as well as converting the bulk of private consumption into publicly-provided goods and services. It could, however, be concluded from the above list that growth objectives are replaced by consumption targets. Furthermore, current consumption is stressed ahead of saving, as future investment benefits will flow from a healthier, better housed and more productive population. This represents an attempt to provide immediate opportunities for the full physical, mental and social development of the human personality or what Streeten (1979) and Stewart (1985) regard as providing "... all human beings with the opportunity for a full life". Making provision for the opportunity of a "full life" implies that basic needs should try to integrate policies

on production, investment and income to meet this objective. According to Ul Haq (1980:32) pursuing the "full life" objective is the only method which can eliminate poverty in the long run.

Basic needs can be specified according to two approaches. In this study, these needs are afforded priority, a framework in which electricity supply can be regarded as providing these needs. The other is to order elements into hierarchies of importance through the specification of a "core" bundle of basic goods and services.

Such a specification is preferred to an extensive list because it highlights the critical importance of the most essential goods and services that should be given attention in the first stage of the development programme. Wide disparities in living standards exist between various developing countries as a result of "... differences in their economic, social, political and cultural characteristics" (Lisk, 1977:338).

Notwithstanding the above disparities, a common trait exists in these countries in that they are, to varying degrees, deprived of certain goods and services essential for a decent life. A "core" list of basic needs in most developing countries will therefore contain many common elements. Any such list must, however, be country-specific, i.e. it should take into account "... the particular circumstances, problems and resources of the economy concerned" (Keeton, 1984:71).

This "core" of basic needs consists of food, shelter, health, clothing, water and sanitation. The "core" specification is certainly not a predetermined blueprint that could be designed for all developing countries.

As Burki (1980:19) points out, plans to provide people with basic needs have to be evolved individually for each country. Employment is not included as it is not a basic need per se. It provides the income necessary for the purchase of basic goods and services. It is thus an essential means to attain basic needs and must be prominent in designing a basic needs strategy. Of particular importance, however, is that employment should be productive. Keeton (1984:11) argues that "... not only should employment opportunities as such be present, employment should be productive". Thus low productivity jobs result in low wages, basic needs deprivation may then follow from comparatively unproductive jobs rather than from unemployment.

While the proponents of a BNA argue that employment creation and income redistribution are essential to the satisfaction of basic needs they do, however, emphasise that these elements in isolation are not sufficient conditions for the elimination of poverty. As Seers (1981:742) points out, they are "... also needs, but of quite a different type, they are instrumental needs, sources for producing or purchasing the basic input needs, e.g. food, water and shelter."

For example, as Keeton (1984:78) appropriately asserts, it may not be sufficient for people to have enough income to purchase enough food for subsistence, they instead, should also consume the right kind of food if their nutritional requirements are to be met adequately. By the same token, it may not be adequate that people attend school unless the education they receive is relevant to their employment opportunities. Hence, the government has an important educational role to play in nutrition and in designing the contents of formal education.

A related and important issue concerns the functional linkages and complementarities that exist in the satisfaction of various basic needs through government services. This is particularly noteworthy as the activities of the various sectors involved in meeting basic needs are closely related. For instance, health is required not only for its own sake, but also for work, which produces food, water and shelter and satisfies other basic needs either directly or through the income it provides. This important circularity of needs carries a positive implication in that once improvements take place in one sector, they may become cumulative. Furthermore, linkages and complementarities are essential as action in one sector without correlative action in other may even be counterproductive. For instance, a water supply system installed without a corresponding drainage system may attract germs and insects that can spread infectious diseases.

The implication is that some basic needs are best delivered together in an integrated program, rather than separately. This is a laudable policy in terms of costs involved in the programs. It is, for instance, less costly to have a coordinated supply of water, nutrition and health than if these goods and services are supplied by separate government agencies.

The interdependence between sectors brings up an important issue of sectoral and geographical priorities. "Basic needs cannot be supplied unlimitedly, which means that countries should have some priorities in supplying them" (Van Wyk, 1982:142). Of cardinal importance, however, is that such priorities in social policy in any country are naturally supposed to reflect its social situation.

The insistence on sectoral priorities arises from the recognition that impossible administrative and financial costs tend to be imposed on many developing countries when efforts are made to improve all sectors together. Although a definitive conclusion about priorities and linkages cannot be reached, there should be agreement on material needs: education, basic health, water and sanitation, shelter, nutrition and clothing, as well as non-material needs: public participation, change in attitudes, equality and self-reliance.

These needs are the key issues that directly affect the quality of life of the poor. In this study, these needs are afforded priority in that they provide a framework upon which electricity supply can be regarded as providing these needs. A section that follows is devoted to coverage of these needs.

3.3 KEY MATERIAL NEEDS

3.3.1 EDUCATION

Education is a basic need in that it plays several roles in the development process. It enhances an individual's chances of obtaining adequately paid employment as well as improving "... the people's understanding of themselves, their society and their natural environment and gives them access to their cultural heritage. It improves living skills, increasing productivity by improving work skills and lowers reproduction by raising women's status ..." (Streeten et al, 1981:134). In summary, education in its many forms has the potential to help fulfil and apply every individual's collection of abilities and talents.

Despite the various conveniences that are linked with education, most poor people in developing countries have limited access to it. The same may well be said of other public services such as health care and water supplies which the poor need if they are to break out of the vicious circle of low productivity and poverty.

Essentially, lack of access to education denies the poor

opportunity to participate fully and meaningfully in the social, economic, cultural and political life of the community. This is the reason why education needs to be of such a standard and availability that it will enable an individual to participate fully in society. For the purpose of prosperity in economic growth and development, this need should be attended to by the government. However, its provision necessitates that authorities should direct greater attention to these groups and areas which are qualitatively and quantitatively disadvantaged. According to Ghai et al (1980:40) quantitative deficiencies in education ensue when educational institutions and facilities are inadequate in some areas, or simply because some people are too poor to be able to afford paying for the education of their children. Furthermore, cultural barriers may inhibit parents in their willingness to send their children to school. On the other hand, qualitative deficiencies arise from inadequately trained or poorly motivated teachers, inadequate facilities and inappropriate syllabuses.

The quantity and quality of educational services can be improved by, inter alia, concentrating efforts in the following areas as indicated by Burki (1980:19) and Van Wyk (1982:149):

- (i) Expanding basic educational opportunities. This is, perhaps, the most important task for educational planners in developing countries in that such expansion needs to be assured by building more schools and increasing participation through the removal of

disincentives. Keeton (1983:124) suggests that programmes such as a system of bursaries, the provision of free education for the entire primary school period, improved equipment and facilities in general and in-service training of teachers, can all contribute positively to achieving such an expansion. In particular, education of women may be one of the best investments a country can make in future economic growth and welfare. Women have great influence on future generations and providing them with better education would improve their attitude to education, which in turn would eventually benefit the country as a whole. The World Bank (1989:50) reports that studies in Bangladesh, Kenya and Colombia show that infant mortality is inversely related to the education of mothers, even allowing for differences in family income. Concerning nutrition, a sample of households surveyed in Sao Paulo, Brazil showed that for any given income level, families were better fed the more educated the mothers were (World Bank 1989:22).

Yet in most developing countries, women have been excluded from the educational system to a significant degree. In Nigeria, for example, expenditure on adult education, especially for women during 1977-79 was reportedly "... very low, receiving about 2% of capital expenditure on education" (Stewart, 1985:129).

- (ii) Improving the quality of education and making it more

relevant to local needs. This could be interpreted as involving people in every facet of their development. The suggestion is that education should be extended not only to cater for the poor, but also with regard to the level of demand for skills. As Lisk (1977:188) argues, some developing countries have significantly expanded their educational systems in the past two decades without achieving considerable improvements in the living conditions of the population.

The chief reason advanced for this failure is the widely known "mismatch" between procured skills and job opportunities. This implies that it is possible to be educated, but their education may be ill-suited to the actual needs or requirements of the economy. A current problem in most developing countries is the existence of considerable numbers of university graduates with few job opportunities, while at the same time, a shortage of appropriately qualified skilled workers and technicians exists.

It is obvious that the creation of ambition beyond possible fulfilment is instrumental in unemployment among the educated and the resultant brain drain (people who are educated and seek to escape their miserable rural existence in the hope of finding employment in towns).

Similarly, it is possible for people to start behaving irrationally, thereby creating "... anti-basic needs political constituencies that sometimes go with professionalisation" (Streeten et al, 1981:134). One solution to the above deficiencies lies in designing educational systems that are relevant to real labour demands as well as to local social and physical conditions. This efficiency could, to a certain extent, be facilitated by reducing the wastage of repetitions and dropouts as well as by making fuller use of buildings and equipment by multiple shifts and summer sessions, and where teachers are in short supply, by using substitute teachers (for instance, public servants, students, workers, retired persons, etc.).

- (iii) Improving the out-of-school environment of the poor, such as community preschool programs, while the above requirements suggest that education should be viewed as an end in itself and as a necessity for the betterment of the quality of life, it is noteworthy that education also contributes to the satisfaction of other basic needs.

3.3.2 FOOD

According to Berg (1980), Ghai et al (1980) and Slabbert (1984), food is the one item of basic needs which in most poor countries should be assigned dominance. Among all human needs,

the need for nutrition is the most fundamental. Food is essential for survival and is a critical factor in an individual's growth as well as the ability to perform competently in society. This is why Streeten et al (1981:124) stress that "... the poor must eat, even if they drink unsafe water, are illiterate and are not inoculated".

Essentially focus on food as a basic need is frequently associated with the contentions that inadequate nutrition leads to high mortality rates, morbidity and a decreased capacity to work or educate and raise children. As Berg (1980:24), Streeten et al (1981:125) and Keeton (1983:124) maintain, insufficient nutrients during pregnancy may lead to low birth weights and high infant mortality. During lactation, it may result in poor health for both mother and infant and increase infant mortality. Poorly nourished children will experience diminished physical growth and in extreme cases, reduced brain size. The significance is that the BNA should reflect the necessity to ensure that adequate nutritional needs of people of all ages, income groups and both sexes are catered for both as an objective in itself and as an instrument of economic development.

Actually, the increased well-being and survival implied by improved nutrition is itself a sufficient justification for a country to invest in better nutrition for all. Moreover, and as Keeton (1983:127) points out, the favourable impact on work capacity and cognitive ability which it connotes, qualifies

improved nutrition as an essential part of any policy of economic growth through its impact on potential output.

Ghai et al (1980:42) propose that nutritional deficiencies may emanate from inadequate levels of income, suboptimal use of income and suboptimal use of food. These factors probably result from different causes which need to be identified and policies designed accordingly. Inadequate levels of income may emanate from inadequate household production, the insufficient use of resources, unequal resource endowment or low factor incomes.

The suboptimal use of income may result from a nutritionally unbalanced pattern of food production, excessive sales of nutritionally essential foods or a misallocation of resources between food for own consumption and cash crops. The suboptimal use of food may arise from poor methods of preparation, unequal distribution patterns within households and customs that prevent the consumption of certain nutritionally valuable kinds of food. Of cardinal importance, however, is that policies to be pursued must depend on the cause of the nutritional deficiency.

For instance, if the cause is inadequate income due to inadequate production, the policy implications should include the introduction of high - yield cash crops, the expansion of extension services, irrigation schemes, land reform and establishment of agricultural cooperatives.

The response most commonly given to counteract the problem of nutritional deficiency has been to accelerate growth in the incomes of the poor, and encourage increased food production. Berg (1980:26) insists that while growth in income and food production is a necessary condition for satisfying basic needs in nutrition, it is not sufficient. Without growth in income, the poor will be unable to afford food even if it is available. Higher incomes may also lead to increased government tax revenue with which to finance nutrition and other basic needs programmes. Along similar lines, increased food production is also necessary to meet the expected increase in demand as a result of higher incomes, without raising food prices which would in turn, reduce consumption levels. However, it is of vital importance that food production should be nutrition - oriented, i.e. satisfying requirements such as calories, proteins, vitamins and other vital nutrients. This should, in turn, be reasonably consistent with consumer preferences. In addition, food production should reach those in need. This implies shifting the focus towards food demand programs, including the strong possibility in some cases of food subsidies aimed at specific target groups.

These programs may, however, vary between different countries depending, as Berg (1980:26) continues, "... on the distribution of malnutrition between rural and urban areas, the extent to which the rural malnourished are small farm families, the particular nutritional problems and their causes the likely cost-effectiveness of feasible intervention, institutional and

finding capacity and political constraints".

Broadly speaking, therefore, policy should be used to influence the character of production, the processing and distribution of food within a country to raise the quantity consumed by the poor. One key solution, which Berg (1980:26), Streeten et al (1981:129) and Keeton (1983:133) all suggest, is that malnutrition should be viewed as part of a complex set of issues contained in the concept of poverty. However, while most people suffering from calorie deficiencies are poor, not all poor people suffer from such deficiencies. In addition, some high - income countries suffer from considerable malnutrition and certain low-income countries have little or none. This implies that countries that are committed to eliminating malnutrition appear capable of doing so.

3.3.3 **HEALTH**

Health services should receive high priority in all developing countries, and should ensure a certain average life expectancy and eliminate mass disease and ill-health.

Notwithstanding the above basic needs theorists have discovered that efforts to improve health of the majority of people in developing countries have, inspite of high levels of expenditure and the technical possibility of solving many of the most common health problems, had only modest success.

Burki (1980:19) attributes this deficiency to the fact that developing countries give priority to curative and urban health care at the expense of preventive and rural health care services. Furthermore, not only are the services inaccessible to most rural population, but the little health care that does exist is ill - suited to their health needs. This is because health care has either been patterned on that of advanced countries or it has been imported without adaptation and with inadequate resources from western models.

Most developing countries also put emphasis on sophisticated hospital facilities at the expense of primary health service. Health problems may be reflected by the unreliable supply of drugs and physical amenities such as health centres, equipment, transport, sanitation, pesticides and other provisions in remote areas. Even where basic medical facilities do exist at some health centres, there may be a problem of insufficient finance for the day to day running of such centres. In addition, the deficiency in technical, administrative and operating procedure and in leadership and supervision reduce efficiency.

Perhaps the most fundamental problem is the shortage of adequately trained staff, exacerbated in rural areas by the majority of qualified personnel being employed in large hospitals in major urban areas.

The solution proposed by some advocates (Burki, 1980:29; Van Wyk, 1982:150 are but a few leading ones) of a BNA is the introduction of a simple community - based health care system which concentrates on preventive health care and focuses on the needs of the people of that area. Specifically, special attention should be given to the following recommendations:

- (i) Health care should be primarily preventive rather than curative. This should take the form of providing, inter alia, latrines and nutrition centres. The provision of such facilities should, however, be accompanied by genuine participation on the part of the people themselves in, for instance, the design and construction of such facilities;

- (ii) communities must participate in health programmes. However, community participation is difficult to implement in a system which does not allow for participation on a broader level. Thus the basic needs approach can effectively be implemented only when power is redistributed on a more equal basis.

Health care is an important facet of the basic needs approach. The realisation that even when the gross national product per capita increased in development countries, the income gap generally widened gave rise to the "basic needs approach to development".

When determining the criteria for adequate health care it is necessary to refer to universally acceptable norms. Unfortunately, differing levels of economic development, transport systems and population densities make such norms difficult to formulate. In the case of black health care in South Africa these norms must be those of developing countries since a comparison with western industrialized countries with their high levels of private ownership (with facilities) and greater ability to afford private health care results in invalid comparisons.

However, the danger of proposing one set of health standards for the wealthy and another for the poor perpetuates apartheid in a totally unacceptable manner. It is suggested therefore that accessible primary health care for all population groups should be the goal, although financial constraints may mean that this would be at the expense of certain sophisticated hospital - based service.

An annual publication by the United Nations Children's Fund (Grant 1988:68) regards the indicator of "access to health services" as "the percentage of the population that can reach appropriate local health services by the local means of transport in no more than one hour".

In South Africa, the Brown Commission of Inquiry into health services (Race Relations Survey 1986:770), which was appointed by the State President in 1980 and reported in 1986, found that the situation in South Africa was far from adequate. The findings included:-

- (a) An inappropriate underemphasis on preventive and primary health care, with only 4,7 per cent of total health expenditure being used for preventive services.
- (b) Concentration of facilities in major urban areas, with the rest of the country being inadequately served.

3.3.4 SHELTER

A need exists in most developing countries for expansion of housing in urban and rural areas. Like food, shelter is fundamental to basic needs. Shelter gives protection against the elements and without it, human existence cannot be ensured. In rural areas, the housing problem tends to be that of the low quality of housing as measured in terms of materials used in construction, types of roofing and flooring, number of rooms and their adequacy in providing shelter from the elements. On the other hand, the problem of urban shelter is more severe since it is concerned with insufficient housing to meet demand and the resultant overcrowding of existing dwellings.

Consequently, the provision of housing to the urban poor is considered to warrant more urgent attention than that of the rural poor.

The principal reasons advanced for this emphasis are, as Keeton (1983:140) suggests, the following: First, increasing numbers of people (usually due to population growth) in most developing countries tend to migrate from rural to urban areas, an exodus which, coupled with natural population increase in urban areas, will grow faster. Secondly, the environmental conditions arising from dense concentration of people in urban areas imply that living conditions are more undesirable in urban than rural areas.

Finally, since the daily contact between the rich and poor is more evident in urban than rural areas, the provision of adequate housing for the poor is a more politically sensitive issue in dense and compact urban areas than in more scattered rural communities.

There is frequently a mismatch between effective demand for and the supply of housing. Available evidence suggests that income is not a constraining factor in the provision of adequate shelter. Streeten et al (1981:144) insist that, with the exception of the poorest, income is seldom the binding constraint, and the major problems in providing shelter therefore do not lie on the side of effective demand".

The consumption of adequate shelter is thus probably because of bottlenecks on the supply side, most evidently in the supply of land, public services and financing. A shortage of land for housing is almost exclusively an urban problem and mostly institutional, legal and institutional barriers to the acquisition of land such as monopoly powers; confused or complicated title deeds, cumbersome legal systems and unrealistic costs involved in land transfers effectively exclude the poor from the land market. Furthermore, without security of tenure, the urban poor will not make the necessary investments to improve the quality of their housing. The above means that enough land should be available to meet the basic housing targets of a decent dwelling per family. This situation often requires a change in the legal and institutional framework of society.

The lack of available public services is also an acute problem in the provision of low-income housing. The cost of services such as water supply, electricity, sewerage, usually account for a large proportion of the total cost of shelter. For instance, it is common practice to find the low-income groups being able to provide their own basic housing but are unable to provide the services to go with it.

In addition to the shortage of public services, a lack of finance also inhibits the supply of low-income housing. While some finance, usually highly subsidised, is lent through public sector institutions and is available only for public sponsored

housing, the bulk of low-income housing is financed from personal savings without the use of institutional intermediary.

To sum up, it is of cardinal importance to note that housing may be supplied through both the private and public sectors of the economy. While the supply of housing in the private sector depends upon such factors as the price of houses, the cost of housing, the availability of credit and seasonal factors, in the public sector the supply is essentially a political issue determined by the estimated social need or value attached to housing by the authorities.

3.3.5 WATER SUPPLY AND SANITATION

An adequate supply of clean water is an essential component in every aspect of life - for domestic use, in agriculture, in industry and in recreational activities. In each of these spheres, water is used in a variety of ways ranging from drinking and food preparation to its use as a cleaning agent and dilutant. For health and hygiene, clean water needs to be available in fairly abundant quantities. The World Bank (1980:1) reports that for a reasonable minimum standard of living, each individual needs between 20 and 50 litres of clean water daily to provide for food preparation, drinking and personal hygiene and sanitation. Furthermore, where the water supply is unreliable, there can be no steady growth in industrial, commercial and social development. The quality of water supply and sanitation services is also a potential health

hazard. In particular, it is often argued that ground water, especially that associated with traditional wells is subject to pollution from septic tanks and pit latrines.

Adequate access to water may be defined in terms of a maximum distance between households and such sources and places of disposal, as well as the number of households sharing the same facilities. Accordingly, Streeten et al (1981:139) assert that the easy availability of water spares women the time consuming task of fetching it and frees them for more productive work and for more attention to satisfaction of their basic needs.

Since a wide range of external costs and benefits exist in the provision of these two related basic needs, public sector intervention is essentially advocated as these needs cannot normally be met by individual action in densely populated areas. There are several ways in which public policy can be used to increase the supply of water and sanitation services. Burki (1980:20) and Van Wyk (1982:151) advocate that more modest standards can be used in the supply of water and sanitation facilities without incurring enormous financial burdens. Instead of supplying piped water to houses, standpipes could be installed in the urban areas. It is obvious that public standpipes are as more appropriate technology in areas where water has to be distributed to a large number of people at minimum cost. In the rural areas, the main alternatives are communal systems with standpipes or properly located and constructed village wells and springs. A

wide variety of technologies are available for sanitation and water disposal. These range from a conventional flush system to a simple vault or borehole, all of which are satisfactory from a health point of view.

3.3.6 CLOTHING

Although there is very little space devoted to this aspect in almost all the literature on basic needs, clothing forms an integral part of basic material needs. The failure to recognise its importance does seem to be a serious omission.

Clothing gives physical protection against elements such as cold, and affords the opportunity to appear decent in public. However, the provision of clothing should be compatible with the social and cultural needs of the population. Furthermore, factors such as climatic conditions and the type of work being executed should be considered when estimating basic clothing requirements.

3.4 NON-MATERIAL NEEDS

3.4.1 ECONOMIC EQUALITY

To promote economic equality, it is necessary under the basic needs approach to provide everybody with equal access to goods and services such as financial facilities, job opportunities and credit schemes. It is essential to note, however, that

access cannot be determined exclusively by the generation of job opportunities and incomes. Adequate availability of basic goods and services by the public and the private sectors should be ensured. A distinctive feature is that inequality, in the sense of only certain groups, classes or races having access to certain goods and services, leads to exclusion of other people from the fruits of development.

Under such circumstances, it is possible that many elements in society would feel ignored and rebel, often leading to rejection of the idea of development being introduced.

3.4.2 SELF-RELIANCE

The philosophy of the basic needs approach requires that each country stimulates initiative and effort in seeking its own way to development without relying on, applying or imitating the experiences of other people. With a few notable exceptions, self-reliance in developing countries has been patterned on that in the developed countries. The emphasis is on the "transfer" of development models and ideas of political decision-making from the developed to the developing country. To the latter group, borrowed models are held out as providing solutions to development problems.

Thus, it is vital that every self-respecting country, in striving to satisfy basic needs, breaks away from inherited and imposed structures and searches for institutions and processes

which attempt to meet the unique problems of its community. This could be successfully accomplished without excluding the need and desire to learn from other people's mistakes, experiences and achievements.

3.4.3 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Successful application of the BNA in a developing country requires mass participation. Popular public participation is an essential component of the basic needs - oriented policy which, according to the Programme of Action adopted by the ILO's World Employment Conference in 1976, implies "the participation of the people in making the decisions which affect them through organisation of their own choice" (ILO, 1976:191). People tend to participate in development only if they have a say in the decision-making process affecting their development. The inference is that economic development cannot be undertaken on behalf of people, but only through, by and with them.

The need for public participation in development, both as the means to an end and as an end in itself is illustrated by Szal (1979:28) who suggests that there are four ways in which the promotion of effective, grassroots popular participation can contribute to significant improvements in living standards.

These are by:

- helping to identify basic needs;
- mobilising resources to meet basic needs;
- improving the distribution of essential goods and services;
and
- satisfying people's desire to participate in decisions
which affect their lives.

In the light of these points, the value of popular participation can be recognised not only as the means of improving the well-being of the poor, but also as a tool for exciting community interest in the various development programmes. Since the resources embodied in the people of a nation are its most important asset, involvement in decision-making can act as a powerful inducement to offer labour and skills as well as other resources to development programmes and projects. This, in turn, may bring about a reduction in the resources required from outside the projects. In addition, involvement in decision-making may directly affect employment by encouraging people to provide resources voluntarily or more cheaply or simply with greater productivity. Assets such as schools, hospitals or roads created in this way can, in turn, contribute to the improvement of employment indirectly.

Above all, effective mass participation is critically dependent on the political and cultural environment of developing countries. As Reynolds (1981:14) points out, "well developed forms of organisation and representatives must exist which guarantee effective modes of participation to individuals in the formulation of needs and of governance over local and central functions during implementation". The important point to recognise is that few developing countries can boast such institutional development: many are basically authoritarians with participation, at best, being nominal and superficial.

Put differently, these countries reflect "... participation that is subject to official control and manipulation that is a mere front for authoritarian dirigisme or coercion [and] is not true participation at all" (Szal 1979:10). This means that the free and unconstrained expression of the people's will is frequently interfered with. This inadequacy in institutional and organisational structure naturally constrains the implementation of development programmes since there is a general lack of the purpose, intensity and support necessary for an attack on poverty and the satisfaction of basic needs.

In a system with adequate mass participation, decentralisation of decision-making in planning and production is ensured. People themselves can determine their basic needs, set local targets for production and consumption and ensure the implementation of these targets.

In this sense, decentralisation will guarantee greater efficiency and ensure production of goods and services that are more closely related to the needs of the people. The important point to recognise is, therefore, that participation patterned along decentralisation lines may prove to be the required tonic for real development. In many countries, however, decentralisation basically implies that incentives will have to be formulated to keep the majority of the people in the rural areas.

One solution lies in limiting decentralisation to certain growth areas in order to have any meaningful effect. Despite the above suggestions, one important aspect remains to be considered. Participation is unlikely to thrive in a hostile climate and its essential aims can only too easily be thwarted. This raises the question of creating positive attitudes in the masses if the ideas of basic needs approach to development are to be successful.

3.4.4 CHANGE IN ATTITUDES

Above all, the success of the basic needs approach to development is critically dependent on the support that people are willing to give it and the acceptance of its importance. It must be recognised that the political and cultural environment in many developing countries is not conducive to rapid and effective introduction of new development ideas.

Several bottlenecks exist, the prime one being the suspicion with which the poor view such ideas. They feel that there are merely a way for the rich to deprive them of something connected to their culture, which is important to them. Clearly, attitudes are of such paramount importance that the success or failure of the whole basic needs exercise turns on this very point. Appropriately Van Wyk (1982:154) argues that the "basic needs will require the co-operation of the people in implementing and supplying the needs ...

The implication of this is that the approach cannot be introduced by government alone and it cannot be expected that government can execute it by itself". Concerted efforts should thus be made by all concerned parties to change attitudes towards a positive contribution to development.

3.5 ELECTRICITY SUPPLY AS A BASIC NEED

Energy usage provides one striking example of the process and conditions of development and underdevelopment in South Africa and the concomitant inequalities in fulfilment of basic needs. Access to affordable and convenient fuels increases as households shift from underdeveloped rural and peri-urban areas to the developed metropolitan centres. The form and quantity of fuels used by households is constrained by the availability and cost of fuels, and household income.

The energy supply problem in developing areas centre on the fact that, the standard, most convenient and affordable domestic energy supply option, electricity, has still not been made available to many black townships, forcing them to rely on costly and inconvenient fuels and batteries. Electricity has been shown to be the most economical and preferred option.

In the field, underdeveloped areas in South Africa may be defined as being mainly the poorer black communities which do not have access to electricity for domestic energy requirements. These black townships around the metropolitan centres have little access either to agricultural land or natural woodland, opportunities for the collection of 'free' fuels are minimal nor do these households have access to inexpensive electricity. Sandwiched between metropolitan and rural areas, peri-urban areas experience energy problems quite different from either.

Households are still reliant on wood and are heavily dependent on the most costly and perhaps least efficient, of cooking, heating and lighting fuels.

Electricity is the preferred supply option for households in developed urban areas, yet two-thirds of the black population living in and around urban centres still do not have access to it. There is still a widespread questioning of the appropriateness and affordability of electricity for black

townships. Black townships cannot afford electricity is the common refrain. However the evidence from many studies over the past decade would appear to contradict these assertions. Once the initial extension fee has been paid, electricity is in most cases cheaper than other fuels for cooking, heating and lighting (Department of Health 1977:20; Eberhard, 1984:235).

Some recent studies which have looked at newly electrified black townships have showed that those who use primarily wood and paraffin can no longer afford not to use electricity.

Electricity is undoubtedly the most versatile and convenient energy source yet its use by South African households has largely been restricted to commercial (white) farms, while most of the black residential areas around metropolitan centres have been denied its benefits. Ironically South Africa produces nearly half of total electricity supply in the entire continent of Africa and currently enjoys substantial excess generating capacity, so much so that a number of power stations have actually been closed. There is no overall shortage of energy in South Africa, only highly inequitable distribution of and access to energy resources.

3.5.1 THE ROLE OF THE GOVERNMENT

All governments allocate part of their budget to the production of basic needs commodities, e.g. education and health and electricity supply. The amounts allocated depend on social and

political forces in the country. It must be assumed that if governments decide to adopt a basic needs approach, then along with this decision goes some commitment to increasing the provision of basic needs commodities.

But governments which have adopted such an approach are still subject to constraints which may limit their freedom of manoeuvre in terms of size and allocation of the budget. There are certain measures likely to reduce these constraints: these include providing information on the benefits of basic needs outputs, in terms of full-life indicators, which may increase popular pressure for the provision of such outputs.

The allocation of expenditures within a given budget can be as critical as the total size of the budget. As stated earlier, too little is known about how to achieve effective redistribution of public expenditure at all levels, central, regional and local.

In general it seems that a socialist society, in which the method of production appeals to the co-operative rather than the competitive instincts, is more likely, *ceteris paribus*, to have a large budget and a more egalitarian allotment within it. This is one of the reasons why socialist societies are likely to achieve higher basic needs standards at any particular level of development.

Organisational deficiencies can affect achievement on basic needs in two ways: first, there may be an inappropriate organisational structure (for example, a centralised structure for the public sector, making it difficult for appropriate local units to develop); secondly, there may be deficiencies within any organisational structure which reduces its efficiency. Policies then can be designed to respond to both these (somewhat interconnected) phenomena.

As far as the first category is concerned, the appropriate needs of any set of institutions tends to be unique to each society, depending on historical evolution, cultural factors and political preferences. In many cases, there are alternative ways (institutionally) of meeting any given basic needs. For example, food may be produced collectively, co-operatively, through capitalist farming or household/family farms. The choice depends on many historical/political factors: but the choice is relevant to the meeting of basic needs and therefore the implications for basic needs could form a major consideration in determining the organisational choice.

The relevance to basic needs comes in three ways: first, the organisational choice affects the distribution of income and hence the ability to meet basic needs from the point of view of incomes. Capitalist farming tends to be inegalitarian compared with collective or family farms.

Secondly, the choice of organisation affects what is produced, that is, food for self-consumption, food for the market, or other cash crops which may in turn affect a society's ability to meet its basic needs through production.

In general, collective/co-operative farms and households tend to give greater priority to producing food for self-consumption than capitalist farms. Thirdly, the mode of production affects the efficiency of the unit - i.e. production for any given inputs and therefore the ability of a society to meet its basic needs from the point of view of production.

Within any given organisational structure, basic needs achievements are much affected by the efficiency of each of the major units. In some societies inefficiencies within the organisations appear to be one of the major obstacles to achievements. For example, the rural health services in some LDCs often lack vital drugs, while schools are poorly staffed and have minimal equipment. To some extent these deficiencies may be due to low expenditure, but efficiency of delivery systems and use when delivered is also a major factor.

3.5.2 THE ROLE OF HOUSEHOLDS

The household is a major focus for basic needs because of its dominant role both as producer and as consumer of basic needs goods. It is in the latter role that the household determines

the relation between basic needs outputs and basic needs achievements or meta production function. It is the activities of the household which determine, for example, how far health clinics are used; the extend to which children go to school; what food is consumed ... and so on.

The efficiency of the household then may be the critical factor in determining the success or failure of a basic needs strategy. If the household fails to make use of basic needs and services, then ensuring their availability will not be sufficient. Moreover, an efficient household can counter many deficiencies of supplies e.g. in making good use of what there is, following hygienic practices and so on. Thus a major area for policy vis-a-vis organisations concerned the efficiency of the household. In practice, this often means the women of the household who tend to be the people primarily responsible for basic needs type consumption, choosing the food, doing the cooking, responsible for family hygiene, for teaching the children, taking them to health clinics, to school and so on.

Policies towards household efficiency then largely come down to policies towards women: such policies concern female education (as adults and as children), female work and productivity and allocation of time to basic needs activities; female access to money, income and their disposition of that income; and more generally, the role of women in the family and in society.

Recently developments in household economics, have begun to focus on allocation of time within the household. Attention has, however, been directed towards measuring the contribution towards production, as normally defined, rather than the basic needs type full-life indicators with which we are concerned.

Electricity supply will undoubtedly alleviate the problems faced by most women, that of having to wake up very early in the morning preparing coal stoves, it will generally improve their status, and their standard of living.

3.6 CONCLUSION

The issue of poverty threatens, if unattended, to tear the social world fabric and create tension among classes and countries. The structure of asset ownership together with its concomitant economic and political power has led to more inequality of income and wealth and allegedly prevented the poor from benefiting from growth. The outcry against these offensive disparities was heard in the halls of power and in international organisations, and the advocates of re-orientation of economic development that was designed to deal more directly with poverty, gave it the name of basic needs.

In the spirit of exhaltation which often accompanies the promotion of ideas, basic need become a slogan of action and in their enthusiasm some referred to them as a new theory of

economic development while others treated basic needs more modestly as a new approach to such a theory. Neither of these characterisations reflect realistically the essence of basic needs.

Despite the stimulus given to research, basic needs do not represent a well-defined body of knowledge or thought to qualify as a theory because they do not constitute a structure of interrelated diverse forces which converge into a system of testable hypotheses in the sphere of development economics. They are theoretically equivalent to other hypotheses of development economics in the sense of leading to measurable results comparable to those derived from traditional theory.

Contrary to the rhetoric of their advocates the theoretical foundations of basic needs are shaky. Basic needs are nothing more than an income redistribution plan in favour of the poor, who are targeted to receive early the benefits of development instead of waiting until the fruits of economic betterment trickle down to them.

What at best basic needs policies are likely to produce, are certain development benefits whose probability of occurrence is difficult to estimate in advance, and which fall under the category of externalities but they cannot form the core of development theorising. Theories require something more concrete and substantiate to be built on than the elusiveness of externalities.