

Module 1 Unit 2

This is a **REQUIRED READING**.

White, Shirley A. (1994). The concept of participation: Transforming rhetoric to reality. In S. A. White with K. S. Nair & J. Ascroft (Eds.), *Participatory communication: Working for change and development* (pp. 15-32). London, UK: Sage Publications.

Introduction

The Concept of Participation: Transforming Rhetoric to Reality

Shirley A. White

Think Globally, Act Locally!

Develop in your own way!

Take control of your own world!

Facilitate dialogue for development decision making!

Power to the People!

Equal rights and justice for all people!

The power-sharing problematique!

A Realistic Utopia!

Third-Culture Building!

Self-propelled, self-supported sustainable development!

Eliminate Poverty and Hunger From the Face of the Earth!

On and on...and on. Verbal flashbacks from the development/communication critique create a mental montage of the highest order! But visual flashbacks are even more disconcerting—from the image of the starving, hollow-eyed Ethiopian child, to the sari-clad Asian mother cradling her malnourished infant, to the smiling Latin American farmer proudly displaying a giant ear of corn! While it is media that portrays this verbal and visual rhetoric, it is the communicologists on the development scene who have the challenge to transform rhetoric into reality. It may be that the verbal rhetoric in this volume cannot meet that challenge but, at least, it will expand the transformable rhetoric, adding to the challenge.

The 'Participation' Concept

The euphoric word 'participation' has become a part of development jargon. Now, no respectable development project can be proposed without using this 'in' word. More than this, a project proposed nowadays can rarely be funded without some provision for the 'participation' of the people. This has been the case for at least the past decade. Provision for 'participation of the people' is likely to become as integral to any project as 'evaluation'; no development project can do without it.

But the word 'participation' is kaleidoscopic; it changes its color and shape at the will of the hands in which it is held. And, just like the momentary image in the kaleidoscope, it can be very fragile and elusive, changing from one moment to another. The kaleidoscope analogy fits because participation is a complex and dynamic phenomenon, seen from the 'eye of the beholder,' and shaped by the 'hand of the powerholder.'

It is relatively simple to say that participation is an important component of development and that 'involving' the unempowered poor is fundamental to development, which leads to the eradication of poverty and injustice. But mobilizing people at grass roots to 'participate' is neither a small task, nor is it a simple task. There is no way to brush aside the concerns and complexities regarding the concept of participation.

Numerous definitions of participation can be found. Participation is contextual, so local participation differs from nonlocal participation. And even at the local level, participation varies in type, level of intensity, extent, and frequency. It is indeed kaleidoscopic. It is undoubtedly contextual. For example, participation, as it is now being discussed and operationalized in the context of the Eastern Bloc countries, whether local or national, is starkly different from participation in the context of Third World development.

Deshler and Sock (1985) conducted a critical review of development participation literature using concept mapping to sort out main concepts and relationships of concepts. They found that a belief persists that 'popular, local participation, and the means of enhancing and nurturing it, are necessary elements in successful development efforts around the world.' They noted that papers and journals on rural development are 'laced with rhetoric for popular participation.' They found very few studies in which there was a 'rigorous analysis' of the participation phenomenon. They concluded that 'concepts, measures and indicators of rural development participation are lacking, as are theories, definitions and conceptual frameworks.'

Their extensive search, however, did yield a useful delineation of two levels of participation:

Pseudo-Participation was categorized as:

- Domestication—This involves informing, therapy, and manipulation.
- Assistencialism—This includes placation, and consultation.

Genuine' participation was categorized as:

- Cooperation—This refers to partnership and delegation of power.
- Citizen control—Which means empowerment.

People's participation in development in which the control of the project and decision-making power rests with planners, administrators, and the community's elite is *pseudo-participation*. Here, the level of participation of the people is that of being present to listen to what is being planned *for* them and what would be done *unto* them—this is definitely *nonparticipatory*! When the development bureaucracy, the local elite, and the people are working cooperatively throughout the decision-making process and when the people are empowered to control the action to be taken, only then can there be *genuine participation*.

This distinction between genuine and pseudo-participation is meaningful. It points to the necessity of an in-depth analysis of just how the concept of participation can be transformed into action in the development process. Moreover, it also requires a careful observation of communication behaviors throughout the process and the use of media to bring about knowledge sharing and learning on the part of all participating 'actors.'

Echoing some of the conclusions of these researchers, it appears that *power* and *control* are pivotal subconcepts which contribute to both understanding the diversity of expectations and anticipated outcomes of people's participation. Deshler and Sock (1985) conclude that:

Development planners and policy makers at the international, national, and regional levels might do well to adopt policies and operations that encourage genuine dialogue and participation in creation of development plans, if empowerment is to be more than rhetoric. Administrators and planners may need to examine their own attitudes, assumptions, and perspectives towards local participants, since it appears from this review that such views are related to assumptions regarding genuine or pseudo-participation (p. 7).

If we are to successfully describe and deal with the gap between rhetoric and reality regarding local participation it is important to know precisely the way participation is being catalyzed for cooperation and has potential for empowerment. It may be that local-level participatory research can not only inventory the extent of participatory action but can also identify the 'requisites for participation as cooperation and empowerment.' It goes without saying that the papers in this volume will lay out diverse perspectives on the concept of participation since this has been the continuing theme of action which led up to the writings.

Three Caveats

Three caveats concerning 'participatory euphoria' were agreed upon by the participants in the University of Poona Seminar on 'Participation: A Key Concept in Communication for Change in Development.' They provide a meaningful frame of reference within which this volume can be placed.

1. *Participatory communication processes are not a panacea for development.* Such processes are not suitable for solving all problems in all contexts or time frames. The mother whose child is dying of diarrhea does not want to 'participate.' Short-term solutions and intervention are also needed. Participatory processes unearth 'root causes' of poverty and oppression, and usually involve long-term goals.
2. *The apparently opposing concepts of 'participation' and 'manipulation' may be viewed from many perspectives.* The interventionist who attempts to 'sell' solutions to 'target population' may be accused of being manipulative and may also be bringing along a whole set of alien cultural premises. However, the participatory social communicator may also enter a village with a particular picture of reality and set of values, hoping the people will come to perceive their oppression the way he or she sees it. This may be equally manipulative.
3. *The price people have to pay for taking part in participatory processes is often overlooked.* It is often assumed the villager has nothing better to do with his or her time. For every hour spent 'participating,' there is an opportunity cost; that is, the fact that the villager may be foregoing more productive activity if the partici-

patory process does not lead to benefits, either in the long or short term. The social communicator should take this into consideration when entering a village or slum.

So, believing in participation brings with it a certain set of red flags which signal caution, concern, and constant care in all aspects of participation's catalytic processes. But this does not mean that experimentation and research regarding all dimensions of participation are not desirable and doable.

A good account of one aspect of the experimentation with participatory development is the report of a workshop on Participatory Technology Development led by Robert Chambers, which focused on the changing thinking about agricultural technology and the rediscovery and reassessment of indigenous technical knowledge (ILEIA, 1989).

An increasing number of publications support and document the argument that farmers have a wealth of knowledge on their own environment, have developed specific skills to use this environment, and are very active and creative in adapting the way they use the environment for reaching their objectives... Recent literature on farmers' participatory research and farmers' participatory extension as well as international seminars and workshops on this subject bear witness to the present interest in participative technology development (p. 4).

Lineberry (1989) reports on ten years of activities of International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD). The report outlines the advantages of the participatory development approach:

IFAD has found that the rural poor, when given the chance, are eager to participate in projects designed to benefit them....A development process which involves people provides a basis not only for improvement in their material well-being but also for progress in their social and cultural life (p. 5).

Many such reports of experiments with participatory approaches are becoming commonplace. But it is not as easy to find significant accounts of experiments with participation in the development communication literature. The final section of this volume presents first-hand accounts of participatory development communication.

Moore (1986) presents a comprehensive discussion of the development communication process noting that 'access to messages provides a basis for knowledge and social transformation through enculturation, socialization and participation.' She points out that 'participatory communication engages media systems for a purpose beyond the mass communication of information.' It has a triple function—to serve as a tool for 'social transformation,' to be the means for 'democratizing the mass media,' and play an important role in the 'selection of new technologies.' The major obstacles to participatory communication, she says, are the 'anti-participatory, often inflexible structures and ideologies, either at local or national government level(s),' and that 'change may be resisted in institutions which publicly acknowledge the need for alternative communication for development and take pride in their progressive stance regarding development issues.'

Moore also points to some pitfalls of participatory communication practice of internal and external nature which view it as 'an instrument of defiance for undermining authority and male superiority.' She agrees that there are inherent contradictions in the participatory process itself and that it is difficult to achieve and sustain a 'dynamic balance between ideology and strategy, between power and countervailing power, between conformist organization and spontaneous non-conformist participation.' The difficulties result from a 'schizophrenia' of perceived polarities in the hierarchical structures. Nevertheless, the positives seem to outweigh the negatives and participatory communication seems the most promising approach for decreasing dependency, building self-confidence and self-reliance of the people, and for transforming indigenous knowledge and heritage into modern-day solutions to development problems, with alienation and powerlessness destined to fade into the past.

The reality notations of the seminar caveats were just that—statements of 'reality' about people as we perceived it. But operating within the reality framework, the ways for meaningful and manageable participatory approaches must be and are being explored. This can happen with a new sensitivity to the people at grass roots and to their ability to build their own problem-solving competencies. The need to step down from various elitist perches and walk through the status barriers into an 'equal human value mind-set' is imperative. The chapters in this volume will elaborate many of these approaches, conceptually, methodologically, and in some instances, practically.

Legitimizing the Concept of Participation

In the 1950s, the modernists worked vigorously to produce development programs, short to long range, which would solve the problems of poverty, health, low agricultural production, burgeoning populations, and so forth. Not only could these folks point to the difficulties but they also could gather facts which could be translated into problem statements and concepts which were profound (and formidable) to the common person—the person with the ‘problem.’ These articulate and profound statements often attracted large sums of money, which were in turn filtered into the ‘target’ area and its people. The larger the sums of money, the more the people were convinced that their problems were real, but the program architects were also convinced that they had the ‘answers.’ In the final analysis, when the money was spent and the problem solvers retreated from the community, the people often shook their head and went back to business as usual. But the residue was disruption of the community. Often a new generation of power elite took control of an increased share of scarce resources and increased their power over impoverished neighbors.

In response to this worldwide pattern of leadership by ‘modernists,’ serious questions began to arise in the early 1970s, often from activists with missionary zeal. They pointed a shaming finger at the exploitation, increased poverty, the lack of attention to human potential, the arrogance of top-down communication, and judgmental notions about the ‘needs of people at the grass roots.’ It was the activist-educators who brought forth the concept of ‘participatory research,’ a methodology whereby the people themselves would have a voice in studying themselves and their situations. It was during this period that Freire (1970) raised the issues of ‘conscientization’ and used the term ‘assistentialism’ (Freire, 1973) to refer to programs which focused on symptoms rather than causes. In such programs the program recipients were treated as passive objects who were unable to recognize their social and economic ills or to enter into recuperative action through indigenous knowledge and initiatives.

And all the finger-pointing and methodological madness of the 1970s activists did get attention. But it took a top power figure to get the point across to the modernists. Only when Robert McNamara (1973), then the President of the World Bank, in a landmark address to his Board of Governors postulated ‘people’s participation’ and the ‘new directions’ strategy did this revolutionary idea gain credibility.

It became a concept with a new face and a new future.

The concern about human rights and human potential has steadily become an honest concern for bureaucrats, academics, and practitioners in the development game. The concept which was originally threatening has become appealing to development power figures. In fact, some astute observers, after the period of euphoria about embracing the concept of participation, have now returned to another cycle of skepticism, speculating that 'participation' is now a new wave of manipulation in the hands of the power elite. The concept is no longer a threat but a politically powerful slogan for popular appeal—another masquerade for control.

But for Fals Borda (1988) there is no question about the positive aspects of people's participation. He calls it 'people's power,' regarding it as a dynamic power 'which belongs to the oppressed and exploited classes...[for] the defense of their just interest' which in turn could 'enable them to advance towards shared goals of social change....' However, it is still a serious question whether the dialogues of participation can actually give a strong enough voice to the people in those decisions which they themselves define as needing to be theirs.

Important Related Concepts

Our introductory commentary up to now has introduced several words which are conceptually and functionally related to participation—words which are relevant to action taking and viable in determining the course of change. Those are: power, control, dialogue, conscientization, shared knowledge, oppressed classes, empowerment, and equal human value. If we 'fast forward' through the following chapters we could add many more. All are integral to the act of participating and engaging in participatory communication—to use Bordenave's terminology, important for walking the 'paths to a participative society.'

Power and Control

The notion of 'power to the people' or 'people power' originally did pose a threat to the hierarchical power structure of development. It connoted a revolution, a Robin Hood-like action, and 'power taking'—a definite loss of status and perks connected with being in a superior

power position. These reactions were linked to a power concept of 'zero-sum' notions of distributive power. The idea of generative power has emerged as a less threatening, more humane and realistic approach to power issues. It is consistent with and appropriate to the concept of participation; that people, congruent with their own human potentials, inner life forces, and cultural identity, can generate their own source of power—whatever power necessary to accomplish the objectives they set for themselves and their community.

Those external development catalysts/activists who aspire to lead people to develop and explore their own power sources must hold a central belief that people are also intellectually capable and have the communication competencies to organize their lives in a more liberated manner. But when this does happen, they must be prepared to back off and allow the 'liberationists' to explore further on their own. If this new freedom of expression and freedom to dialogue with any other human being and to learn from them is exercised, it may be regarded as a boomerang effect by the activists. It is like waiting for one's child to grow up and be on his/her own, but disbelieving and resisting when it actually happens. If the participatory acts are genuine and the power generated is enlightened with functional knowledge, then the context wherein self-reliant development can take place becomes a reality.

Liberation

People, if given the opportunity and after acquiring the appropriate knowledge necessary to develop their own strategies, can achieve or gain the ability to determine the course of their own lives. The sense of self-confidence they develop is in itself empowering. Though empowerment is usually conceptualized as moving out of a condition or sense of deprivation or oppression, it can also be looked at as a positive, holistic outcome of self-discovery, successful human interaction, and the ability to dialogue with people different from one's self. The confidence to engage in group processes is itself a liberating action.

Genuine participation is intrinsic to genuine relationships. Supportive communication behaviors characterize the truly liberated person. True liberation brings with it a solid sense of self, an active concern for one's self in relation to others, and an inner life force which pushes toward meaningful human relationships, liberating and catalyzing action toward shared goals.

Conscientization

Freire's concept of *conscientization* is central to the theme of participation. To activate consciousness and critical awareness of one's situation and environment, one's identity, one's talents, and one's alternatives for freedom of action is an imperative to participatory action. Freire (1973) notes 'the permanent search of people together with others for their becoming more fully human in the world in which they exist.' This suggests that conscientization and critical awareness alone do not inevitably lead to action. It does suggest that action is more likely to be an outcome when people engage in dialogue and search together.

Freire introduced the concept of 'dialogic action.' His recent book with Ira Shor (1989), *The Pedagogy of Liberation*, is an exciting and useful articulation of the kind of education which is necessary for liberation. Freire's dialogic action unites the concept of action with the concept of reflection—reflective thought being regarded as the core of education. He uses the concept of 'praxis,' which for him, is a process beginning with reflection, continuing with action, and returning to reflection in a spiraling, circular manner. Atucha and Crone (1982) have successfully applied this theory of conscientization and dialogic action as a communication methodology in an integrated education, health and family planning program in Honduras.

Interestingly this project is exemplary of transactional communication outlined by Nair and White (1987) as a continuous interaction of people at the grass roots and information sources over time 'to arrive at shared meanings.' The Atucha and Crone project cast the health institutions and their representatives in a dialogic role with the campesinos themselves, activating a conscientization process which ultimately resulted in the campesinos' involvement in decisions which affected them. The researchers concluded:

The experience of the project has been valuable in that the goals of the institutions involved have coincided with the needs and interests of the communities. In addition, the tools used in the development of the project have given rise to new knowledge which has strengthened the technical capacity of the personnel involved. By establishing close contacts with the communities through the techniques of horizontal communication, a dialogue has been generated in relation to their own reality, through which problems have been identified and alternative solutions sought (p. 80).

Empowerment is achieved through conscientization. It can become specialized through participatory processes which increase understanding and a sense of control necessary for making contribution to development decisions. Having enough confidence to demand one's rights, and get them, does not rest in conscientization alone, but in generating one's own power and uniting with others in making demands which are mutually beneficial. Empowerment also rests on the integrity of people and their culture, enactment of personal values, and aspiration to preserve identity—all are necessary for sustaining the psychic energy required for human development and change.

Self-Reliance

The concept of self-reliance is an integral aspect of participation, both as an outcome and as a part of the process. Participation in and of itself is an act of self-reliance which must be accompanied by self-confidence. It is a necessary element for enabling people to move out of dependency relationships. It is an important concept for development and for participatory communication, but it can be interpreted and operationalized from a number of differing perspectives.

In development circles, the use of the term 'self-reliance' often refers to conditions of economic stability and policies which in turn impact on 'country-level' political stability. That is to say, economics and politics are often inseparable processes in development. To become self-reliant means that focus is on strengthening local economic resources and making the community more self-sufficient, at least to the point of providing indigenous employment opportunities. But local-level resources do link a broader community to clusters of small villages, and to state-, regional- and country-level economic resources.

There have been many examples of development policies pursued in the name of self-reliant economics that have had devastating effects. In some cases, the road to self-reliance has been mapped in terms of the exploitation of a particular commodity which happens to be abundant, or in the case of agriculture, a crop which grows well in a specific area. By specialization, moving away from diversity, some countries have become more, rather than less, resource dependent and are at the mercy of the world market. This interpretation of self-reliance has often been translated into a lower quality of life for rural people by forcing them to change stable living patterns or to migrate to overcrowded urban

settings. Additionally, it has not contributed to the autonomy and independence of countries. There are of course natural resource issues which do fit this interpretation of self-reliance. Oil resources are one example. Participation of the people—the masses—in the macro-level economic and political decision making, from this self-reliance perspective is necessarily limited to exercising their preferences in the political process which may only be available in democratic political systems.

But the goals for self-reliance at the local level can focus more heavily on human resource development needs which do not necessarily negate the economic dimensions but complement them. Immediate concerns can focus on basic needs of the people, catalyzing individual and group participation. This becomes a challenging arena for making participatory communication a part of the dynamics as an important activity to develop self-reliant individuals who are confident enough to speak up with their own points of view, unite together to define community needs, and have a strong voice in setting priorities and action agendas. This includes taking control of the media, its messages, and ideally its ownership. Through indigenous media, the masses can be made aware of available resources, and be encouraged to take advantage of useful information which the media presents in a language they can understand.

When individuals become self-reliant, their behavior will change—from apathy to action, from dependence to independence, from alienation to involvement, from intolerance to tolerance, from powerlessness to assertiveness, from defensiveness to supportiveness, from manipulatable to self-determined, from other-directed to inner-directed, from ignorant to knowledgeable. A community of self-reliant people will be capable of diagnosing its own problems, of developing innovative solutions, and of fostering development diversity which is relevant, culturally sensitive, and ecologically sound and sustaining.

Knowledge Sharing

Knowledge systems, knowledge generation, knowledge transfer, targeted knowledge acquisition, have traditionally been the conceptual property of the academic, the well-educated and the power elite. They were linked closely with development 'hardliners' who recognize only 'expert, political-based or science-based' knowledge as valid and credible. In fact, they are convinced that the reason for development was the

'lack of knowledge' of the masses and the 'possession of knowledge' by the development bureaucracy. So designing of development projects and persuasive communication campaign strategies to sell these development projects, was standard operating procedure.

But when the concept of indigenous knowledge and its informal knowledge system crept into development, concepts of knowledge generation, knowledge acquisition, and knowledge sharing painted an entirely different picture of the development process. Reluctantly, the hardliners admitted that even though superior technical or scientific knowledge was valid, it might not be relevant. Gradually it was recognized that a partnership between scientist and people at the grass roots provided a stronger case for knowledge generation and application via useful and contextual research and practice. By setting up continuing dialogue, both parties of the development action modified their positions regarding knowledge and the resulting knowledge bases.

But an even more important outcome of knowledge sharing and joint discovery was the feeling of worth and equality which grew out of interpersonal interaction. Participatory research innovators began using Gramsci's term 'indigenous intellectual,' which gave recognized status and value to the grass roots person. Simultaneously, the scientist or agent of change learned from the people, gaining a new respect for both the person and for his/her ideas and insights.

The methodologies of participatory research, or participatory action research, thus became critical in the development process itself, and became an important way to operationalize the concept of participation. Recognizing the diversity and complexity of generating information—which is of immediate utility in solving immediate problems and yet has potential for expanding a widely applicable knowledge base—is a joint challenge. Collective investigation and analysis of issues and problems not only enhances understanding but also brings about both short- and long-term solutions.

But this is a radical change in perspective for the creation of knowledge and what is seen as 'legitimate.' This was well articulated by McGuire (1987):

Participatory research is based on a set of assumptions about the nature of society and about social science research that are directly opposed to the assumptions of the dominant, positivist-informed, social science research. Participatory research offers a critique of, and [a] challenge to, dominant positivist social science research as

the only legitimate and valid source of knowledge. It provides a radical alternative to knowledge production (p. 10).

Participatory researchers value useful knowledge and place a high value on developmental changes. Often adult educators as researchers put analysis within community and social structures. They conceive world in terms of 'conflict theories of society,' recognizing conflict of interest, inequality, and the dynamics of oppression and change. Problem definition in the participatory and action research traditions is influenced by the tradition's commitment to 'real' problems, for a variety of interest groups may be affected by research results. As a matter of fact, oppressed peoples often can identify their problems even when scientists or development catalyzers do not observe them (Brown and Tandon, 1983).

Uphoff (1992), the reporting on a seven-year irrigation project to improve water management and agricultural production through farmer organization and participation, admitted that his understanding of social sciences was drastically altered in the process of his research. He confessed:

As I became immersed in efforts to establish farmer organizations so that some of the poorest families in an underdeveloped country could improve their standard of living, I found myself rethinking much of what I had previously learned as a student and as a professional social scientist. Fortunately, as the conventional explanations of individual motivation and collective action began to appear less satisfactory, I was able to find many helpful ideas in writings on the 'cutting edge' of various disciplines ranging from physics and business management to cognitive science and philosophy (p. 3-4).

'Rigorous' and 'analytical' approaches to problem-solving, although they have their merits, can blind one to possibilities. They stereotype judgments about people and impose notions of narrow, sequential causation where more diffuse, concurrent influences and effects need to be understood and utilized with more expansive conceptions of human nature and motivations (p. 273).

Uphoff's comments are enlightening and represent the change of mind-set required to insure genuine participation. It seems apparent that unless people can acquire knowledge and other 'tools,' like confidence and ability to produce their own knowledge they will be unable to play

out their own struggles for local control and self-reliance. This is important for knowledge sharing and for the establishment of indigenous knowledge systems which will create a conducive environment and facilitate the acquisition of resources for education and training in the local context. Indeed, one of the charges of participatory communication for change and development is to catalyze and energize indigenous knowledge systems and the necessary communication systems to make them operative.

Conceptual Interfacing

These introductory comments make the point that participation as a key concept in communication for change and development is meaningful only as it interfaces with other important concepts, some of which we have just elaborated. It is probably fair to say that no one makes the linkages and connections in the same way, nor is that desirable or necessary. It is desirable, however, to work toward development which will open up communication linkages. This will bring about dialogue and knowledge sharing which enables people at the grass roots to breathe new life into these concepts in their own way.

The challenge of leadership for doing this rests with development communicators. At least that is the point of view of most of the authors contributing to this volume, and certainly the viewpoint of the international scholars and practitioners who participated in the University of Poona seminar.

An Invitation

We invite you to explore this volume selectively, and engage in dialogue with each of the authors. If one, several, or all of the presentations trigger your thinking and catalyze your exploration of the concept of participation presented here, the struggle to make accessible our thinking to you will be worthwhile. The list of contributors provides full addresses. We invite you to make direct contact with them through correspondence. More importantly, it would be even better if our presentations inspire you to create the opportunity for dialogue and interaction in an oppressed community. They are not difficult to find.

In fact, as I finalized writing this introductory chapter, I was intrigued

by an interview which was on US network television's, *Good Morning America*. The broadcast team was in Atlanta, Georgia exploring that 'southern community' from a micro-level perspective. One featured interview was with the former US President Jimmy Carter who now lives there. He was graphically pointing out the flip-side of Atlanta. Behind its progress, wealth, and hightech developments, Carter pointed at the vast numbers of homeless, poverty-stricken, unemployed, familyless people, and the dehumanized conditions of their lives. He has a five-year 'mission' to focus his time and energy on these poverty-stricken, depressed communities, and work with the people to determine their needs and together 'walk a path' toward solution of their problems. I watched and listened with optimism. His statements were intriguing and exciting—triggering off a juxtaposed reflection in my mind. Yes, a single individual can in fact catalyze self-determined development which can make people more self-reliant.

While rhetoric is always with us and perhaps remains just rhetoric, in the case of participation on the parameters of development circles, there is some indication that rhetoric is steadily evolving into reality. Numerous private and public foundations, nongovernment organizations, government development agencies, and international development organizations are making continuous, serious efforts to facilitate popular participation. The positive efforts of such institutions and agencies are recognized. However, in the case of communities or countries, the vision of participation can only become reality through channeling the energy and intellect of people into human relationships and dialogue.

'Genuine participation,' fortunately and unfortunately, is driven by human compassion, unselfish motives, sensitivity to the feelings and worth of others, supportive communication, openness to change, and the shifting of responsibility and power. Skeptics say it is unrealistic to have an expectation of 'genuine participation.' Optimists say we *can* create a new reality which honors cultural human rights and operates within a contextual environment which is tolerant of diversity and sensitive to human needs. It is possible to blend diversity and achieve common goals in the course of development.

Organization of the Book

'Diversity' aptly describes the contents of this volume. While it is loosely

organized in four parts, you will find that many ideas and concepts are common among the writings and in some respects are 'blended.'

We would urge the reader to consider each chapter on its own merit and as indicative of the scholarly and practical endeavors of each contributor. All authors contributing to this discourse are actively engaged in pursuits dedicated to make a difference in development communication. They are committed to generating knowledge and facilitating courses of action which give life to the concept of 'genuine' participation and thereby transforming rhetoric into a reality.

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