

# The Right to Development Assistance, and the Duty to Contribute: A Case Study from Zambia

BY DARREN HEDLEY

*The inordinate disparity between rich and poor, a source of acute suffering, keeps the world in a state of instability, virtually on the brink of war... The solution calls for the combined application of spiritual, moral and practical approaches. A fresh look at the problem is required, entailing consultation with experts from a wide spectrum of disciplines, devoid of economic and ideological polemics, and involving the people directly affected in the decisions that must urgently be made.*

*Universal House of Justice, The Promise of World Peace, 1985*

## Introduction and Background

We live in a time of increasing polarization of wealth and poverty, a process which provides some of the most poignant examples of how the international community allows basic human rights to be contravened. The United Nations Human Development Report says the top 200 billionaires had a combined wealth of \$1,1345 billion in 1999, up by \$100 billion, while the income of the 582 million poorest people in developing countries barely exceeds 10% of that, at \$146 billion. In the 30 wealthiest countries, life expectancy exceeded 75 years, while it averages 48.9 years in sub-Saharan Africa, and drops to 39.1 in Malawi and 37.9 in Sierra Leone. These inequalities are now classified by the UN as human rights violations, which now include economic, social and cultural rights, not only political and civil rights.<sup>1</sup>

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We see amongst us men who are overburdened with riches on the one hand, and on the other those unfortunate ones who starve with nothing; those who possess several stately palaces, and those who have not where to lay their head... This condition of affairs is wrong and must be remedied. Now the remedy must be carefully undertaken.<sup>2</sup>

If the international community would recognize the right of every member of the human family to the means of a secure livelihood, there could be a greatly increased flow of aid funding into poverty reduction programs in the most disadvantaged countries of the world. But few could argue that extra resources would be enough; having rights does not necessarily imply simply receiving handouts. Among numerous ingredients of effective development programs, there is arguably a set of duties that the individual beneficiaries should fulfill, to *contribute* to their own personal development and that of their community. These duties are important not only in terms of the practical requirements of implementing poverty reduction programs, but also in terms of the spiritual development of the individuals, their families and communities. And looking more broadly at such programs, by actively participating and contributing at a local level, people develop capabilities to participate globally in creating a more just, unified world.

This paper examines the experiences of a poverty reduction program implemented in Zambia, Southern Africa, by an international NGO, CARE, and the policy process whereby it sought to enshrine the principle of rights being matched by responsibilities. Zambia has suffered a long-term economic decline from being one of the wealthiest sub-Saharan countries in the 1960s to one of the poorest (UNICEF, 1995), and like most African countries is currently undergoing a structural adjustment programme (SAP) involving economic liberalisation, privatisation, removal of food subsidies, introduction of fees for services, and decentralization of government services. Few infrastructure services like water and sanitation exist in peri-urban settlements, and the government has embraced policies of community participation and partnership to mobilise more actors to assist with national development.

Since 1994, CARE's Project Urban Self-Help (PUSH) has worked in peri-urban settlements in Lusaka and Livingstone, with a combined population of 350,000, facilitating appraisals and needs assessments, forming community institutions that liaise with City Councils ("Area-Based Organisations," or ABOs), undertaking infrastructure improvements and establishing savings and loan services. The project encouraged residents' ownership and active participation in their own development, as an element of the capacity-building and sustainability of the project, while CARE provided capital funds and technical assistance for water projects and other interventions.

This expectation of considerable participation on the part of residents was in line with widespread agreement internationally that long-term development will require micro-level transformations (as well as macro transformations), involving people in strengthening their own capabilities, and establishing transparent and effective local institutions. Despite initial agreements on this point, however, many residents pressed for CARE to provide financial and other “incentives” for them to participate in meetings and other work involved in their communities, a practice common among many other local and international organizations.

As PUSH was expanded into the Programme of Support for Poverty Elimination and Community Transformation (PROSPECT), it became necessary for the programme to formally agree with stakeholders on its policy with respect to incentives. The problem was reframed in terms of the objectives of sustainable livelihood improvement which the programme sought to achieve. Through a consultation process, PROSPECT attempted to engage residents’ participation in establishing a workable policy. As an expatriate manager of the programme, I decided to shift from actively directing the final stages of this process to encouraging Zambian staff to lead it. I hoped this decision would allow a more locally-appropriate and sustainable policy to emerge which would be widely owned by staff and counterparts. At the same time, I was conducting qualitative research and writing a dissertation reflecting on both the policy content and process.

This paper commences with a description of the context and the problem, followed by an analysis of the issues involved from the perspective of the Bahá'í Writings and other literature, and then an explanation of how the policy was set and how stakeholders understood the issues. The paper provides an insight, I hope, into the complexities of defining rights and responsibilities in a world of stark economic contrasts, cultural divides and clashing organizational mandates.

### **Drawing on the Bahá'í Teachings in the Process of Development**

Bahá'is concerned with rights and duties in the field of international development have the challenge, firstly, of understanding Bahá'u'lláh's vision of a more equitable world without uncritically inheriting elements of theories prevalent in the world today. In addition, one must attempt to discern potential “transformational portals” from the present towards that vision, portals in which one can visualize oneself moving and acting. One's understanding of current realities and of medium and long term goals can not be static:

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...your assumptions, your ideals, the way you interpret the world around you, your aims, your values, your approach to life are but a few of the elements that form the framework of your endeavors.... The framework of your initiatives must evolve over the years, but even when it is incomplete it must hold your actions together and give your movements direction.<sup>3</sup>

Furthermore, they must be able to articulate their vision in various ways to their co-religionists, to other development practitioners and researchers, and to members of the general public. To engage in dialogue and action with like-minded people often requires that Bahá'ís know and work within—but are not constrained by—paradigms or frames<sup>4</sup> which are regarded as setting and shaping the wider agenda. The framework of human rights has risen in prominence in international policy over the past two decades and is being mainstreamed into the international development field in the form of “rights-based approaches” to development.

This framework of human rights has been evolving since the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which Karel Vasak explains in terms of a framework of three generations of human rights.<sup>5</sup> The first generation pertains to civil and political rights concerned with liberty, and the second generation pertains to economic, social, and cultural rights concerned with issues of equality. The third generation pertains to collective or solidarity rights, outlined in general terms in Article 28 of the Universal Declaration which declared: “Everyone is entitled to a social and international order in which the rights set forth in the Declaration can be fully realized.” Weinberg points out that “...more than establishing normative standards, the human rights discourse provides a mechanism for people of divergent convictions to learn about each other, resolve particular disagreements, and arrive at new understandings of what is possible for human beings.”<sup>6</sup>

The Bahá'í approach to the problem of extreme poverty is based on the application of spiritual principles, encompassing all of these three generations of rights. The bedrock of the Bahá'í approach is the principle of oneness, a profound universal vision, implying a move towards greater solidarity, more cooperative and consensual modes of decision-making, the equality of women and men, and the unity in the diversity of the races. And it states unequivocally that all human beings are born with equal rights, to grow and develop their potentialities with equal opportunities. Bahá'u'lláh compared the world to the human body, which is composed of a huge variety of cells, composing various organs and systems, with very different but complementary functions.

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No cell lives apart from the body, whether in contributing to its functioning or in deriving its share from the well-being of the whole. The physical well-being thus achieved finds its purpose in making possible the expression of human consciousness; that is to say, the purpose of biological development transcends the mere existence of the body and its parts.<sup>7</sup>

Justice is a preeminent means to this oneness, and until justice is valued over greed, the gap between the rich and the poor will continue to widen. A new economic order can be founded only on a vision of community that is world embracing and on an unshakable conviction of the oneness of mankind. This allows a dialogue that expands beyond current economic constructs to one that anticipates the emergence of a global system of relationships of equity and justice. The economic system anticipated in the Bahá'í Writings, although it will no doubt resemble the present system in many ways, will have significant points of distinction.

The Bahá'í view of income distribution, for example, allows for differences but eliminates both extreme wealth and extreme poverty. This is effected through laws and regulations as well as by the promotion of voluntary sharing, to limit personal wealth to moderate levels and provide all people with the means for living a dignified life. Also, the Bahá'í Writings anticipate the development of community social service institutions which afford relief to the suffering, sustenance to the poor, shelter to the wayfarer, solace to the bereaved, and education to the ignorant. At the same time, both the responsibility and the right to work for one's sustenance is seen as sacred, and idleness and begging are prohibited.<sup>8</sup>

In 1983 the Universal House of Justice called for the more widespread incorporation of social and economic development into Bahá'í community life, by beginning to apply spiritual principles, practice rectitude of conduct and participatory consultation, "...to uplift themselves and thus become self-sufficient and self-reliant."<sup>9</sup> "Progress in the development field will depend largely on natural stirrings at the grass roots, and should receive its driving force from those sources...", and "all, irrespective of circumstances or resources, are endowed with the capacity to respond in some measure to this challenge, for all can participate in the joint enterprise of applying more systematically the principles of the Faith to raising the quality of human life."<sup>10</sup>

In a 1993 statement of the Office of Social and Economic Development (OSED) approved by the Universal House of Justice, a number of concepts were set forth, drawing on the previous decade's experience. It stressed that capacity-building and learning are the definition and goal of development:

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It has often been said that development is not a product to be delivered by the “developed” to the “underdeveloped.” Rather, it is a process the main protagonists of which have to be the people themselves. The greatest concern of Bahá'í projects has to be the development of the friends' capacity to make decisions about their spiritual and material progress and then to implement them. In an ideal project, while concrete action is directed towards visible improvement of some aspect of life, success is measured by the impact these actions have on the capacity of the community and its institutions to address development issues at increasingly higher levels of complexity and effectiveness... Approaches to development centered on the donation of goods and services, so characteristic of traditional religious charity and the programs of the welfare state, are known to have debilitating effects and often lead to paralysis.<sup>11</sup>

...learning to apply the Teachings to achieve progress could be taken as the very definition of Bahá'í social and economic development.<sup>12</sup>

A further statement by the Bahá'í International Community relates this capacity-building back to a vision of oneness and an ever-advancing civilization:

The most important role that economic efforts must play in development lies, therefore, in equipping people and institutions with the means through which they can achieve the real purpose of development: that is, laying foundations for a new social order that can cultivate the limitless potentialities latent in human consciousness.<sup>13</sup>

On one level these statements appear to coincide with much of what is being thought and written in the wider development field, but as we will see there are quite challenging issues which relate to this focus on capacity-building.

### The Emerging Consensus on Participation

In the face of disappointing results after decades of predominately top-down and charity-based development, it has become a point of nearly universal consensus among international organisations that people's participation is essential to development. This may be one of the only relatively unambiguous lessons learned.

The international community can look back at a half-century of “development” enterprise with mixed feelings, at best. Pessimism comes easily, as solutions from the left are lacking legitimacy and promise, and welfare and overseas development assistance commitments are hollowed out by Northern governments' need to reduce their deficits and respond to other imperatives.

The “New Policy Agenda”<sup>14</sup> of liberalisation and reduced government has often failed to address the decline in economic growth in Africa and Latin America, with negative effects on the poor.<sup>15</sup> The World Bank itself, as a major proponent of this agenda, has acknowledged that this restructuring does not lend itself to clear, unambiguous solutions.<sup>16</sup>

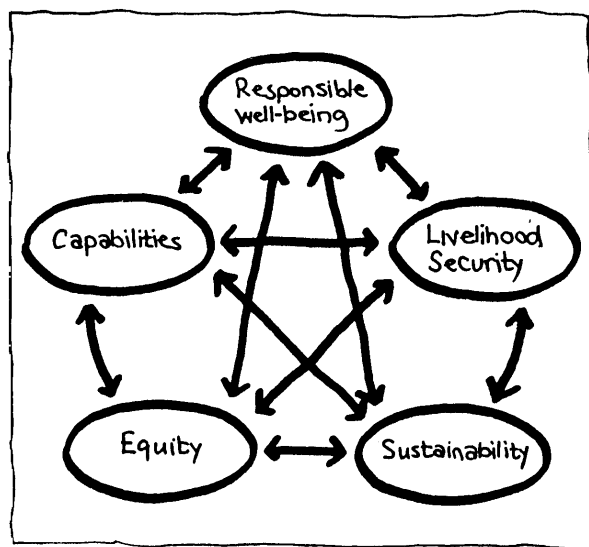
Along with the discouraging trends, there has been a renewed global emphasis on poverty elimination, exemplified in the 1995 Copenhagen summit on social development. Some of the ideas coming forward, echoing those of previous international task forces<sup>17</sup> are for radical means to increase funds for development and restructure the global order, such as a tax on global currency transactions and more ambitious Third World debt relief. As important as resource transfer is, however, more charity is not the answer. The challenge needs to be approached on a different order of magnitude, addressing the social, economic and spiritual conditions which create and allow poverty to exist.

So what are the root causes of poverty? We have had a decades-long debate over whether to blame poverty on structural inequality or Third World institutional incapacity and corruption.<sup>18</sup> Many see empowerment as the fundamental need, but Thomas<sup>19</sup> contrasts the views of Freire<sup>20</sup> who saw empowerment in terms of being conscientised to challenge existing power structures, and Schumacher who focussed on deficiencies in education and technology and prescribed self-help measures. Growing numbers believe that people must have self-reliance and community solidarity - to be able to take local actions *and* to influence policies and structural inequality.<sup>21</sup> Thus, a practical approach to poverty reduction recognises:

- *Local initiative is still the foundation, whether or not outside funds materialise to support it:* hundreds of thousands of grassroots organisations have formed by poor people to help themselves achieve what development assistance has failed to achieve;<sup>22</sup>
- *Outside funds should serve to leverage internal resources to maximise impact:* the gap between the supply and the need for development financing is so great that whatever external funds are available should be used as seeds which can lead to a sustainable harvest of internal capacities and resources;
- *The benefit of development funds will be determined by the effectiveness of programmes and capabilities:* without viable development programmes in place, which strengthen people’s capabilities, development funds generally increase dependency, fail to achieve sustainable benefits and ultimately cause resentments and divisions;<sup>23</sup>

- *Maximise self-reliance and good governance as a negotiating position:* to negotiate debt relief and a fairer global economy, Third World governments can gain a strong moral and practical position if they can demonstrate a commitment to long-term national development, and popular participation in transparent institutions. This was the case in the recent management of Uganda's debt relief, involving a coalition of LNGOs, Novib, Oxfam, the World Bank, and the Government of Uganda.<sup>24</sup>

This raises a final conception of participation, which is that participation is a process in which the development and exercise of people's *capabilities* is both the means and the end. A capability can be defined as "...a developed capacity to think and to act in a well-defined sphere of activity and according to a well-defined purpose."<sup>25</sup> Important capabilities include the capability to look beneath the surface to understand social situations, to identify needs and potentials, to initiate projects and sustain them to completion, to build environments of unity based on an appreciation for diversity, and to understand and work with one's strengths and weaknesses. This conception fits well with current views on the importance of capabilities in promoting household livelihood security, exemplified in the following diagram by development guru Robert Chambers:



*Note:* The overarching end is well-being, with capabilities and livelihood as means. Equity and sustainability are principles which qualify livelihood to become livelihood security, and well-being to become *responsible* well-being.

Figure 1: Capabilities as Basis of Sustainable Development  
(Source: Chambers, R. (1997). Whose Reality Counts? Putting the First Last  
London: Intermediate Technology Publications.)



## Human Nature and Participation

Of course, it would be of limited value to expect people to fulfill a responsibility to voluntary participation if they have little basic willingness to do so even to a moderate extent. By definition, attempts to legislate or coerce unpaid participation would be contrary to the ideal of volunteerism. This raises the question of our assumptions about human nature, of people's basic motives for development. While it is beyond the scope of this paper to explore the issue in depth, several observations can be made about the malleability and unpredictability of human nature.

First, the Bahá'í principle on human nature, one which is probably intuitively sensible to many people, is that *all people* have a dual nature, including a more noble, community-minded aspect, as well as a more self-centred aspect. This principle is critical in helping resolve what the Universal House of Justice refers to as a “paralyzing contradiction” in which people proclaim their longing for peace, harmony and progress, yet “... uncritical assent is given to the proposition that human beings are incorrigibly selfish and aggressive and thus incapable of erecting a social system at once progressive and peaceful, dynamic and harmonious, a system giving free play to individual creativity and initiative but based on co-operation and reciprocity.”<sup>26</sup> Equally paralyzing, perhaps, may be the assumption that the “poor” are somehow less capable of solidarity and law-abiding behaviour than are the “rich” (however one might hazard to define the two categories), as if material conditions of life dictate human behaviour. From such an assumption one might conclude that the “poor” are helpless, and that they must be provided with the means of existence and given a system to live in which is constructed by the “rich” - who are often white and male, highly educated, and particularly coming from or at least trained in “advanced” economies.

According to the Bahá'í view, people's current behaviour may vary between the noble and ignoble, but there is always the potential for them to learn that all will benefit if we each become more cooperative and contribute towards prosperous communities and societies. The view is: I see oneself as part of one human family—all have rights to the basic means of existence, I cannot be comfortable seeing others in abject poverty and am therefore drawn to work for positive change, and I seek to develop myself so that I may contribute more effectively to the development of all. By focusing more on this potential in ourselves and others and striving towards it, we gradually reduce the presence and influence of the less desirable traits, and bring out the real capabilities and gifts in each individual. In particular, ‘Abdu'l-Bahá explained the importance of religion and the influence of “True Educators,” or the Messengers of God:

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Man is said to be the greatest representative of God, he is the Book of Creation because all the mysteries of being exist in him. If he comes under the shadow of the True Educator and is rightly trained, he becomes... the center of the divine appearances, the source of spiritual qualities... If he is deprived of this education he becomes the manifestation of satanic qualities, the sum of animal vices...<sup>27</sup>

With respect to this view on human nobility, we should hasten to add that what is *not* intended is the abnegation of the individual's concern and responsibility for self and family. It is highly praiseworthy for an individual to engage in work to support one's family. It would be unfair for one to judge others in terms of how they allocate their time, especially when their conditions are clearly very difficult and different from one's own. But it is equally misleading to think there is a tradeoff between individual livelihood and community wellbeing—the two are intrinsically intertwined. What *is* intended is that we recognize that we all have rights and responsibilities, and that we all participate in building a society in which they can be exercised. If we don't build this society, who will?

Second, people's current willingness to participate without payment is partly an empirical question, which can be gauged through observation and research in a variety of social-economic-cultural contexts. One does not have to look far in any country to find examples of people voluntarily participating, and PROSPECT provides many such examples. Estimates in Britain range from 20% to almost 50% of the population taking part in at least one voluntary activity each year.<sup>28</sup>

Third, given that volunteers do exist, by no means does there seem to be any simple answer to the question of what motivates volunteers. In a review of research publications on the motivation of volunteers Van Til<sup>29</sup> summarizes their findings in the following propositions:

- People volunteer for multiple reasons, among which are their own personal and social goals and needs
- The individual who volunteers typically does so only after weighing alternatives in deliberate fashion
- The realm of voluntary action is complex and many-faceted, and different organizational tasks appeal to different motivation forces
- Concern for others, while not always purely altruistic, remains an important motivating force for much voluntary action

- The motivation to give and to volunteer is shaped and constrained by broader social realities, and particularly by the omnipresent reality of world chaos and destruction

Smith<sup>30</sup> finds a similar diversity of motivations, and also points out the circumstances leading to volunteering are important, that friends or relatives often recruit volunteers.

Fourth, clearly, people's beliefs and images of the world and of social change are very critical to shaping commitment and behaviour, and these images can change. Boulding writes of people's images of the world as conceptual frameworks which guide thinking, and which are themselves influenced to varying degrees by new information. The significance of the new information, however, is not intrinsic and universal but rather depends on how each individual filters and interprets it—"the meaning of the message is the change which it produces in the image."<sup>31</sup> Much debate about social change is in terms of dichotomies, such as dichotomous images of human nature (eg. altruistic vs. self-serving, material vs. spiritual), or dichotomous images of how society is divided and what a "good society" is (eg. urban vs. rural, capitalist vs. communist). While these dichotomies are useful heuristic or learning devices, they should not be treated as fixed realities.

An increasing stream of theoretical trichotomies posit three alternative images of human beings and institutions, and people tend to reflect principally one of these images, perhaps the same image they see in themselves. Chin and Benne describe three types of change strategies.

- Empirical-rational—assumes people are rational, and will change if considered personally advantageous
- Power-coercive - change comes about only through compliance with authorities or those in positions of power, through fear of threat
- Normative-reeducative - norms are the basis for behaviour, and change is a reeducation process in which old norms are supplanted by new ones.<sup>32</sup>

Both the rational-empirical and power-coercive change strategies have their place, but their materialistic image of human beings have often been imposed by development agents in a way that doesn't take account of the solidarity, hospitality and reciprocity of other cultures. Development projects have tended to convince grassroots people that their traditional modes of living, thinking and doing are backwards, so "...the old convivial and familiar spaces which gave the people life were, at best, reduced to 'commercial centres' where money became the main instrument for social recognition and survival..."<sup>33</sup> In addition to being insensitive to culture, development has promoted productive eco-

conomic activities while undervaluing the “reproductive” activities - mainly of women—which underpinned them, including building the unity of the family and community. There is an increasing need for men to share these responsibilities, and create institutions that respond to the needs of the human spirit.<sup>34</sup>

Finally, there have been some good attempts to validate cultural, spiritual images, such as the Four Worlds Development Project<sup>35</sup> which developed a curriculum and community development approach based on the guidance on dozens of Native North American cultural elders. The Rural University in Colombia, or FUNDAEC (*Fundación para la Aplicación y Enseñanza de las Ciencias*) places service to the community at the forefront of the rural wellbeing training program in which tens of thousands of people throughout Latin America are participating.<sup>36</sup> The Orangi Pilot Project in Pakistan, one of the best known urban development projects, draws specifically on a strong, spiritual tradition. “The traditional principles of diligence, frugality, charity and modesty have enabled Orangi people to build, without any subsidies, from their own savings, their houses, their sanitation, their schools, their clinics, their transport.”<sup>37</sup> Hope and Timmel<sup>38</sup> have provided a clear articulation of Christian and African community development and transformation, drawing on Freire’s critical awareness, human relations training in group work, organisational development, social analysis, and spiritual inspiration.

### **Establishing and Reflecting on The PROSPECT Policy On Participation, Ownership & Community Service**

If we are going to understand the duties of participation alongside the right to development assistance, it is necessary to understand the manner in which such a policy can be established. I now turn our attention to the way in which this idea has been implemented and reflected on in PROSPECT.

In keeping with the evolutionary nature of the human rights discourse and the learning approach of development projects explained above, the policy sciences have been shifting from a rational, stage model of policy formulation to an idea of policy cycles,<sup>39</sup> competing paradigms and experiments in small steps rather than through comprehensive, falsifiable theories.<sup>40</sup> Similarly, development projects have also tended to move away from a blueprint to an adaptive approach, with one model given as a series of successive stages:

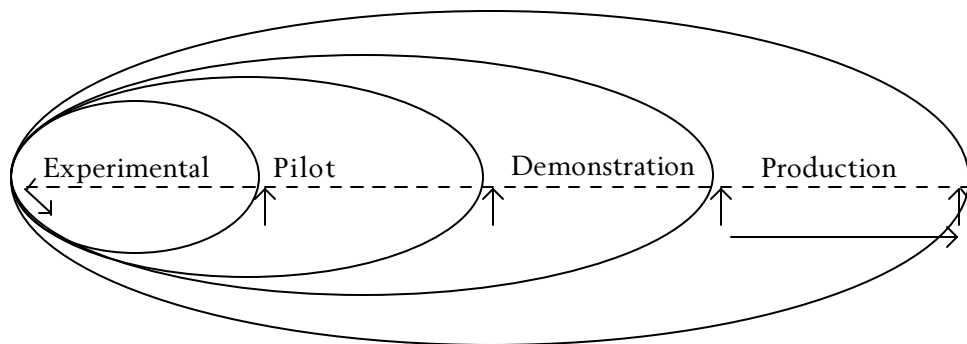


Figure 2 (Source: Cusworth, Franks (1995). Management of Development Projects. London: Longman Scientific. After Rondinelli)

Much of what has been attempted in PROSPECT is explained in the approach known as Participatory Action Research (PAR—explained above), a learning approach developed by Freire, and popularised by writers such as Fals Borda,<sup>41</sup> and Rahman.<sup>42</sup> Its central concern is how the poor and oppressed can transform their own environment by their own *praxis* (action-reflection).

In this context, following requests by residents for “incentives” to pay for their participation, we engaged in research to explore the question: *is the voluntary service and community participation policy appropriate?* This is, in a sense, a test of whether it was fair and realistic to expect that there would be a duty of participation to match the right to development assistance, and an exploration of how the balance would work.

The research was conducted in 1998, and augmented by observations and reflections dating back over the four years prior to that. The research was focussed around qualitative approaches and the PAR framework, and was conducted by myself in conjunction with several Zambian colleagues. The main methods used were focus group discussions and semi-structured interviews with residents, meetings with and written feedback from PROSPECT and Council staff, and unstructured interviews with CARE International officials. Participatory research has numerous benefits, including avoiding the fallacy of complete research objectivity, and the separation of thought and action that has characterized much of social science.<sup>43</sup> Nonetheless, my position as manager of PROSPECT could affect my views and conclusions, and other staff or residents could wish to take advantage of research to advance an interest, so the research program was balanced to moderate these potential biases. The key to validity was that we strived to be critically self-aware, and practice *intersubjectivity*,

dialogue among colleagues to test the ideas, systematically laying out and testing the potential biases.

My general approach was to ask respondents what they understand the policy and how it came about, how they have been affected by the content and process of this policy, their opinion about its sustainability, what they think about motives, as well as the differential experiences and contributions of women and the poor. Interviews were also held with a regular Zambia-based consultant to CARE internationally, and with an internationally-recognized expert in urban development.

Finally, a workshop was held with all PROSPECT staff, several City Council staff, and two representatives from the community organizations in each of our settlements, and it was facilitated by consultants. The workshop included numerous small group sessions, including some stratified in terms of groups such as residents, to encourage real opinions to come forward. This was the workshop at which the policy was formally set out and adopted.

## Research Results

CARE's history had an important bearing on the evolution of the PROSPECT policy. CARE International works in both relief and development, but generally when there is no national conflict or emergency, CARE seeks interventions which have long-term developmental aims, not merely charity. CARE Canada took the lead in establishing an office in Zambia in 1992 at the government's invitation, to help mitigate the effects of a national drought and SAP. When the crisis faded, and recognising that PUSH activities were dependent on continued food supplies, CARE Zambia sought to establish a more sustainable urban project, in "PUSH II," funded by the UK Overseas Development Administration (now DFID) from 1994 to 1998. PUSH II aimed specifically to overcome the reliance on food, to build sustainable development capacities within the community, and thus in PUSH II and the subsequent PROSPECT policies, there was an avoidance of providing food as incentive.

In terms of appropriateness of the policy as viewed from an international perspective, the experts interviewed and senior staff in CARE UK and CARE Canada expressed strong support in the PROSPECT approach. They believed that individuals have a core capacity of willingness to improve the community which is important to nurture, although clearly most people have limitations in their time available to contribute to wider development. So-called relief and development incentives often do displace ownership and longer-term development capabilities. Volunteerism weaves the social fabric of society, and

strengthens civil society. There were initially reservations expressed about expecting “altruism” and generosity from the very poor. Then, examples would be mentioned, of “absolute martyrs,” people like Anne Frank who—in the most desperate conditions—are capable of nobility, or skipping some steps in Maslow’s hierarchy. Uncertainty was expressed about whether such martyrs can be cultivated, but it was felt that training would probably help to at least bring some sense of community-mindedness.

When discussing the way in which volunteerism was practiced, it was reported that residents’ contributions varied from a few hours a day for a week in laying pipes, to large portions of days over a number of months, with clearly larger burdens on the elected ABO members. The tangible contributions made by residents are: *labour*, for example in laying pipes or helping dig bridge foundations; *management and leadership services*, for example by ABO members educating and supervising others; *cash contributions*, including water fees and contributions for bridges. The expectation established between CARE and the elected residents leaders, in the Chipata water project, was that residents would work approximately four hours a day for five days of pipelaying and water point construction, and that leaders might work one day per week. 70% of the households did this, according to the Resident Development Committee’s (RDC’s) records—while others reported spending six hours a day for almost six months. In addition, several RDC members reported spending up to 12 hours daily for more than six months, although some of the staff questioned these numbers.

In the Malota bridge project, residents determined their own contributions spontaneously at the street level: some did the digging, others gathered water, or cooked for those working, whilst others paid for the few skilled carpenters. As one person commented: “We have no problem in working without pay, and others working many days can get a payment.”

Our experience over several years, which was reinforced by the research, finds a diversity of motivations among residents—common need, feeling of ownership, hope for additional “incentives,” and respect - underpinned by a tradition of strong mutual support between relations and friends. Perhaps it can be summed up by saying that the main motivation for people to contribute their time and labour, is mainly to address development needs—such as supply of water—for themselves, their family and community. Most of the residents agreed with the policy, especially women, and residents felt greater ownership for development in their settlements, wanting to undertake further projects under the same arrangements. Some RDC leaders and residents worked out of a sense of service, addressing needs and feeling compelled to continue. At the same time, some RDC members and general community members hoped for incen-

tives, and Chipata residents were actually promised incentives of free water by their community leaders, which didn't materialise. Gaining self-respect and respect of others was another important motive.

Residents indicated that they are willing to work alongside their neighbours in a collective effort to address strongly-felt needs which they have identified. In the Chipata water project, people expressed appreciation at avoiding the previous dangers of long trips at 4:00 am to obtain water, more than saving money and time as PROSPECT's research indicated. Beyond the general sense of cooperative work, there is a distinctive form of service orientation in which contribution is out of proportion with personal benefit. Respondents in Chipata and George identified two ABO chairpersons, and many ABO members and residents explain their motive as "*ozi peleka*" or "*kuzi peleka*," having service at heart. They explained that once they had started working for the community it was hard to stop because people got to know and need you more. They said, "those of us with a conscience would feel guilty to abandon such work."

More widespread in the community is a sense of mutual support, taking in relatives for weeks at a time, sharing food, or helping others in time of sickness or death. In particular, women traditionally provide unpaid services to family members and others, so they participate in water projects to reduce personal risks, and save money and time previously expended on collection. Still, many staff members felt that unlike the village setting, where kinship bonds and strong capabilities for solidarity exist, this motive is weak in the monetary economy of peri-urban areas.

An important issue was that of allocation of benefits from projects, such as the Chipata water project. There was proportionately greater participation from women and the poorest, and some uncertainty about the extent to which they could access the benefits due to the cost of the water, a problem which is currently being addressed. The well-off could afford to pay a participation fee, or hire others to work for them, while men often didn't volunteer as they were busy working, which women seemed generally to accept.

The interventions, such as the water schemes, show signs of sustainability, such as the RDCs' independence vis à vis CARE and the Council. The scheme is financially self-sustaining, and Chipata RDC has already passed through one difficult transition of power. Residents shared that sense of ownership to a slightly lesser degree, while in some cases it was overshadowed by having been misled by the RDCs. RDC leaders have agreed that any incentives for sustainability will have to be generated internally, negotiated through their participatory decision-making processes, and will be performance-related.



The approach is showing a likelihood of developing capabilities to participate in governance in wider fora. The RDCs are increasingly seen as a legitimate reference point and representative of the residents, and are invited to help shape policy and plans of a number of government and international agencies. They have confidence and capabilities to speak out on the basis of their own real and sustained accomplishments, and the democratic institutions they have behind them.

All factors considered, the content of the current policy can be concluded to be basically appropriate, and there is nothing which needs to be removed or fundamentally changed. This broad acceptance of the current policy was confirmed formally through a workshop in which ten RDC members and all PROSPECT staff participated, and in which as manager I was all but silent (not wanting to inordinately influence the process, and reduce local staff's ownership of the process).

Equally important as a lesson to be learned from PROSPECT's policy is the process by which it came into being. The initial idea for the policy certainly had much to do with international policy on community participation. The idea of voluntary service was initially set out, and was gradually discussed and formed the basis of a learning process. Diverse influences arose over the time period, and some conflict surrounded the policy, until recently when it was repeatedly placed on staff meeting agendas. Incremental adjustments have been made, until demands and the opportunity of the new project created a launch window to formalise the policy.

In learning about the policy, both staff and residents have changed and made some compromises. We have realised the extent to which "incentives" rest on having a sound overall approach to fostering community participation, ownership and a spirit of service. Discretion and autonomy bring the needed flexibility to innovate within the policy, such as seen with bridges and midden boxes, but also confer a sense of responsibility. Culture turned out to be an unknown and unexplored factor in determining individual and community responses to the policy.

### **Conclusions on Rights and Duties in Poverty Reduction Programs**

People are often concerned that a rights-based approach to development would become an exercise in handouts, which from a developmental point of view would appear unsustainable and inappropriate. It seems justifiable, from the perspective of the Bahá'í Teachings and from the standpoint of development literature and practice, to expect that low-income "beneficiaries" of de-

velopment assistance could also be considered “participants.” The case study of PROSPECT in peri-urban Zambia demonstrates how a policy establishing that arrangement has come into being and how it has been accepted. This suggests that it is reasonable to expect that in keeping with the right to support from the international community for livelihood improvement and community development, individuals would also have a duty to bear—not just to work to take care of themselves individually, but to contribute to the development of society. This makes sense not only as a safeguard to sustainably and greater practical impact, but as an element of the dignity and spiritual growth of the individual. Though at times there may be real constraints in time and physical capacity which must be respected, all people should be encouraged to make some moderate contribution to the development of themselves, their family and community. While not placing excessive expectations on them, the materially disadvantaged may surprise us both with how much spiritual and other resources they have and how much development is really about using those resources rather than providing financial and material resources. Clearly, such an approach must be carefully and flexibly implemented with open consultation with all concerned, with due regard to important varying factors such as emergency conditions etc.

As was the case with the formulation of the policy in PROSPECT, the principle of service to humanity is perhaps a laudable one but can not be legislated—neither with those whose basic needs are met, much less with the very disadvantaged. This is an important Bahá'í principle, of the voluntary adoption of principles, and the loving acceptance of people irregardless of their response to our suggestions. Wherever possible it is desirable to give people the choice of whether they will actively pursue opportunities for community service. In the current context of development assistance, however, with limited resources for development and a tremendous call on those resources by those who have received no assistance as yet, it could be argued that the duty for beneficiaries to contribute a reasonable amount to their own development be considered a fixed requirement. In keeping with the trends of partnerships between civil society, government and the private sector, it might be interpreted that holders of resources must negotiate on behalf of donors (shareholders) to obtain the best deal possible in terms of reaching out to the maximum number of beneficiaries.

Ultimately, however, our perspective shouldn't be reduced to the handing out of services and goods, and the learning and capacity-building of people and communities are really the essence of development. This will undoubtedly provide the main principle by which to guide and refine policies to balance rights and responsibilities in development.

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