

Non-governmental organisations and sustainable rural development in Lesotho

Summary

Non-governmental organisations are increasingly considered a viable source of development assistance for the promotion of sustainable development. This article analyses the contribution of non-governmental organisations to sustainable rural development, with special emphasis on agriculture, in Lesotho. The findings are that they have made a significant contribution, but that their efforts were not sustainable, due to the fact that the communities were not willing to forego their old lifestyles and accept the sacrifices needed to achieve the advances introduced by sustainable rural development. Communities need to embrace the challenges and changes aimed at improving their lifestyles.

Nie-regeringsorganisasies en volhoubare landelike ontwikkeling in Lesotho

Nie-regeringsorganisasies word tans toenemend beskou as 'n moontlike bron van ontwikkelingshulp met die oog op die bevordering van volhoubare ontwikkeling. Hierdie artikel ontleed die bydrae van nie-regeringsorganisasies tot die bevordering van volhoubare landelike ontwikkeling, met spesiale klem op landbouontwikkeling in Lesotho. Die bevindinge is dat hulle 'n groot bydrae gelever het, maar dat die pogings nie volhoubaar was nie, omdat die gemeenskappe nie bereid was om hulle ou lewenswyses te laat vaar en opofferings te maak ten gunste van veranderinge wat deur volhoubare landelike ontwikkeling teweeggebring is nie. Dis nodig dat gemeenskappe die uitdagings en veranderinge aanvaar wat nodig is om hul lewensbestaan te verbeter.

C current debates on sustainable rural development in the less developed world centre on the question of who should be responsible for promoting it. From the left and left-centre viewpoints, writers argue for continued state-induced rural development. The right advocates the increased involvement on the part of the private sector. The centrist viewpoint supports greater involvement of non-governmental organisations (cf Bebbington & Farrington 1993; Clark 1991; Shepherd 1998), which are defined as organisations belonging neither to the public nor to the private sector (Shepherd 1998: 18).

The enthusiastic optimism relating to the ability of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) to promote sustainable rural development in the less developed world is prompted by many factors. NGOs recognise the need for democratisation in development. NGOs reduce the failure-rate of state-sponsored rural development and address private enterprise's dilatoriness in promoting equitable participatory rural development (Clark 1991: 22). It is therefore widely believed among donors and recipients of aid that NGOs have the best potential to mobilise the private sector, the public sector and the communities at grass-roots level, forming a tripartite network with a good chance of achieving sustainability (cf Bebbington & Farrington 1993; Clark 1991; Powell & Seldon 1997; Shepherd 1998). Steward (1997: 11) argues that those who advocate the use of NGOs in development believe that the NGOs "can provide a link between big development and poor people by telling the 'big' developers where to put the development". Moreover, NGOs can manage development aid better than other bodies because they have less bureaucratic red tape and corruption, and therefore ensure that the aid reaches the communities (Powell & Seldon 1997: 14).

Within the context of small dependent states in southern Africa, such as Lesotho, the potential importance of the role of NGOs as arbiters in all fora of sustainable human development was demonstrated by the formation of the Southern African Development Community's (SADC) Council of Non-Governmental Organisations. The need for NGOs in southern Africa is also highlighted by the fact that there is a preference among international donors for South Africa, which impacts negatively on other SADC countries. "Donor flight"

is also caused by donor fatigue in South Africa's small neighbouring states after many years of unsuccessfully pumping aid into these countries (Mashinini & De Villiers 2001: 68).

However, in the less developed world, the performance of NGOs continues to be hampered by lack of funding, dependence on resources from larger NGOs in the North, internal bureaucratisation, and abuse by autocratic governments (cf Bebbington & Farrington 1993; Clark 1991; Walters 1993).

1. Non-governmental organisations and development in Lesotho: a historical overview

The presence of human development-orientated non-governmental organisations in Lesotho dates back to colonial days (MB Consulting 1987: 14). The first generation of these pre-independence NGOs was humanitarian in nature and aimed primarily to promote the social welfare of some Basotho through disaster and/or emergency relief, and was established mainly by the churches (MB Consulting 1987: 16). These NGOs were what Clark (1991: 63-71) calls "Northern" in that they were branches of NGOs whose headquarters were in the northern industrialised countries. These pioneer NGOs were, among others, the Red Cross, the Save the Children Fund, CARE, the Catholic Relief Services (CRS), and the Roman Catholic Co-operative Movement (Sechaba Consultants 1995). As early as the 1960s, the Save the Children Fund, in particular promoted capacity-building and human development through the provision of scholarships to poor but capable Basotho children, giving them access to education either in Lesotho or in Britain. After Lesotho gained independence in 1966, most of the names of these NGOs were given the "Lesotho" suffix, perhaps in order to create the impression that they too had been decolonised and belonged totally to Lesotho. This practice spawned names such as CARE-LESOTHO, CARITAS-Lesotho, MS Lesotho, and so on. Some NGOs used Lesotho as a prefix, for example the Lesotho Red Cross and Lesotho Save the Children. In practice, however, these NGOs remained controlled and were funded from their headquarters in the North.

The second generation of pre-independence NGOs was orientated towards development in agriculture and was promoted by the colonial government in an effort to boost agricultural production and export to Europe (MB Consulting 1987: 18). These NGOs include the Wool and Mohair Growers' Association and the Lesotho Co-operative Society (Sechaba Consultants 1995: 10).

The third generation of pre-independence NGOs was supported by donors in the 1960s and aimed to assist the economic development of Lesotho towards independence. These NGOs included the International Red Cross Society, the Catholic Bishops' Conference, and the Save the Children Fund (UK) (MB Consulting 1987: 28).

The fourth generation of development NGOs mushroomed in Lesotho in the 1970s following a major campaign on the part of the United Nations Organisation through its Development Programme (UNDP) which launched a United Nations Volunteers Service (UNVS) initiative in the country in 1972. The bulk of these NGOs sought to promote development in Lesotho by providing capital and technical assistance from countries in the North. In essence, therefore, the NGOs were a front for the mobilisation of humanitarian aid flowing from northern countries into Lesotho in order to assist her in attaining economic independence as well. Some of these NGOs were Helvetas, World Vision International, the German Development Service, the Canada Fund, and the African Development Fund (MB Consulting 1987; Sechaba Consultants 1995).

After independence, during the 1970s, the Government of Lesotho never explicitly associated itself with NGOs. It did, however, give them room to operate without much interference, except for the indigenous NGO, the Co-operative Movement, which it initially harassed for being in favour of the Basutoland Congress Party. The Co-operative Movement had been established by the late Dr Ntsu Mokhehle in the 1950s to mobilise the economic and human resources of Basotho peasants and spread the philosophy and practice of participatory community development and self-reliance, as advocated in the philosophy of Pan-Africanism at that stage (Sechaba Consultants 1995: 14). The Co-operative Movement became disorganised as a result of the politics of the 1970s, between the Basutoland Congress Party and the Basotho National Party. The government

eventually co-opted it into its Ministry of Agriculture (Sechaba Consultants 1995: 18).

In the 1980s the Government of Lesotho showed its commitment to NGOs by encouraging the launching of the Lesotho Council of Non-Governmental Organisations (LCN) as the supreme body that would co-ordinate and oversee the affairs of NGOs in the country in the 1990s (Kingdom of Lesotho 1989). Thus, speaking in an opening address, the permanent secretary of the Ministry of Planning, Dr S D Bhatt, expressed the government's position on NGOs and development as follows:

[...] government recognise[s] that because of the limited resources at its disposal, joining hands with the private sector, which includes the NGOs, is the best option for sustained development (Kingdom of Lesotho 1989: 2).

The Lesotho Council of Non-Governmental Organisations was launched in 1990 to co-ordinate all NGO activities. It operated on an annual budget of more than R3 million, mostly of foreign origin, which was distributed to member organisations. The government also developed an NGO credit centre (UNDP 1998: 7).

However, until the present day, the government has had no explicit policy on NGOs. Concern in this regard prompted the UNDP (1998) to urge that the entire community should be consulted to formulate a policy on NGOs which must include transparent selection criteria, their mode of operation, their relationship with government and donors, and monitoring instruments. Moreover, since the heavy involvement of the LCN in the efforts to restore democracy after the palace *coup d'état* of August 1994, both the government and the donor agencies in Lesotho are of the opinion that the LCN is political and has exceeded its constitutional mandate. The government responded by recalling its civil servants, especially the then executive director who had been seconded to the LCN, while the donor agencies withheld development assistance to the LCN. These acts administratively and functionally paralysed the LCN (Mashinini 2000: 184).

2. Methodology

This article presents the results of a survey of 21 non-governmental organisations and their contribution to sustainable rural development in Lesotho. The survey was motivated by the fact that, since independence, most rural development initiatives undertaken by the government have failed to become sustainable mainly because of bureaucratic red tape, administrative inefficiency, autocracy, nepotism, corruption, and the negative attitudes of the people towards government-initiated development (Mashinini & De Villiers 2001: 61). This situation has led to donor fatigue, with many donor organisations having left the country and gone to the recently democratic South Africa. Since Lesotho's development depends on donor finance, their departure is likely to create a shortage of capital for development in the country. The absence of high donor funding, compounded by the lack of domestic finance for development, means that NGOs — especially those from the industrialised countries — are likely to remain Lesotho's biggest source of development aid. It is therefore important that their present contribution to development be assessed in order to have an idea of their likely future contribution to sustainable development in the country.

The sixteen international NGOs were selected on the basis of the fact that they came from industrialised countries and funded development in Lesotho either by sponsoring indigenous NGOs or by becoming directly involved in rural development activities themselves. They were also selected because they were involved in rural development, as registered by the Lesotho Council of Non-Governmental Organisations (LCN), and it was to them that one would therefore look for NGO support of sustainable rural development in the future.

The five indigenous NGOs were selected on the basis of size, the rest being little more than what one would call community-based organisations (CBOs). The five indigenous NGOs were also included in the sample because in addition to being funded by some of the large NGOs from the industrialised countries, they generated their own funds and assisted some smaller community-based organisations as well. Given the high profile role that NGOs were expected to play in development in Lesotho, the study therefore focused, as shown in

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Tables 1 and 2, respectively, on the sixteen international NGOs and five indigenous NGOs.

Table 1: International non-governmental organisations

Non-Governmental Organisation	Typology		
	Humanities	Development	Support Service
Africa 2000 Network		x	x
African Development Foundation		x	x
Canada Fund	x	x	x
Caritas-Lesotho		x	
Helvetas-Lesotho	x	x	
Lesotho Red Cross Society	x	x	
Lesotho Save the Children	x		x
Lesotho Workcamps Association	x	x	
MS Lesotho (Danish Volunteer Service)		x	x
Plenty Lesotho	x	x	x
Rural Self Help Development Association	x	x	
Skillshare Africa			x
The German Development Service			x
Unitarian Service Commission of Canada	x	x	
United Nations Volunteers Programme			x
World Vision Lesotho	x	x	

Source: Mashinini 2000: 195-211.

Table 2: Indigenous non-governmental organisations

Non-Governmental Organisation	Typology		
	Humanities	Development	Support Service
Machobane Agricultural Development Foundation		x	x
Maoamafubelu Development Organisation		x	
Matsieng Development Trust	x	x	x
The Adventist Development and Relief Agency	x	x	x
The Christian Council of Lesotho	x	x	x

Source: Mashinini 2000: 195-211.

The researchers prepared a checklist of questions, and personal interviews were conducted with the management of each of the 21 NGOs between August and December 1998. The timing of the survey coincided with the political inferno of 1998 and the interviews consequently took not the anticipated two weeks but three months. Interviews with the affected communities proved impracticable because of the political situation. The following topics were covered in the interviews: staff, funding, operational area, management control, mode of operation, projects, and problems. The typology of the NGOs in Table 1 and Table 2 was compiled on the basis of an analysis of each one's activities.

3. Lesotho NGOs: a brief survey

The Africa 2000 Network began operating in Lesotho in 1992. Its objective is to promote environmental conservation for sustainable development in Lesotho through the provision of development assistance in the form of funding and technical support to indigenous NGOs and directly to the rural communities upon request. The Africa 2000 Network itself is part of and funded by the United Nations Development Programme. It has a salaried staff of three and is scheduled to run for seven years, after which it is to become autonomous (Mashinini 2000: 186).

The Canada Fund started in 1976. It is one of the avenues by means of which the Canadian High Commission offers capital and technical aid to rural communities in Lesotho in the field of sustainable agriculture and non-farming income-generating community projects, as well as welfare and disaster relief. It employs one salaried staff member (Mashinini 2000: 191).

In the late 1970s the Roman Catholic Church launched Caritas-Lesotho. It offers charitable, capital and technical assistance to rural communities to promote sustainable human development. It has five salaried staff members and receives funding from the Roman Catholic Church (Mashinini 2000: 194).

The German Development Service (GDS) was established in 1979 as the German Volunteer Service. It provides technical assistance to all sectors for sustainable development. It is in the process of transfer-

ring its Maseru-based office to Pretoria. It receives funding from the German federal government and from humanitarian organisations in Germany (Mashinini & De Villiers 2001: 59).

Helvetas is a Swiss NGO, which started a branch in Lesotho in 1981. Its objective is to provide financial and technical development assistance to certain government sectors, especially a rural water supply to indigenous NGOs like the Machobane Agricultural Development Foundation, as well as to some common interest groups in the rural areas in the field of natural resource management (Mashinini 2000: 196). It employs some ten people.

The African Development Foundation (ADF) was founded in Lesotho in 1980. It has its headquarters in Washington, from where it is funded by the USA government. It provides both financial and technical assistance to sustainable agricultural projects and off-farm income-generating projects run by rural communities. It also supports research which aims to promote sustainable development. It employs three salaried staff members (Mashinini & De Villiers 2001: 61).

The Lesotho Red Cross Society (LRCS) began in 1971 as a Lesotho branch of the Red Cross International, which first operated in Lesotho in 1967. The LRCS is funded mainly by the International Red Cross Society and promotes sustainable development by means of the provision of capital, technical and relief assistance to needy communities. The fields of sustainable agriculture, health, sanitation, water supplies, emergency and disaster relief are given first priority. It has a salaried staff of about 50 people, including officials and field staff, as well as some vehicles (Mashinini 2000: 198).

The Lesotho Workcamps Association started in 1977. It is a regional organisation which aims to promote sustainable development in Botswana, Lesotho and Swaziland via the provision of technical assistance in conservation, land reclamation and infrastructure construction and maintenance. Governments and NGOs such as the German Development Service fund it (Mashinini 2000: 201).

In the early 1960s the Lesotho Save the Children Fund began to operate in Lesotho as the Save the Children Fund International. It employs eight salaried staff and some volunteers. It provides technical assistance to various sectors and focuses mainly on primary health care

for children. Funding is generated from its own projects as well as from certain governments and NGOs abroad (Mashinini 2000: 204).

The Mellen Samvirke (MS) Lesotho started in 1976 as the Danish Volunteer Service. It is a branch of the Danish Association for International Co-operation. It promotes sustainable development in the fields of agriculture, income-generation, and human resource development. The emphasis is on the development of partnerships among groups within the rural communities and the indigenous NGOs whom it funds, on the basis of common interests. The MS Lesotho itself is funded by the Danish government and by some NGOs based in Denmark. It employs ten salaried staff and has twenty volunteers (Mashinini 2000: 207).

Plenty Lesotho was launched in 1979. It has its headquarters in Ontario, Canada, from where it is funded. Plenty Lesotho operates in the Quthing district where it promotes agriculture, forestry, a rural water supply and income-generating projects, especially those run by women's groups. It provides financial and technical assistance to the communities at Sebakala and Ha Makoae in Quthing via six salaried staff members.

In 1982 the Rural Self-help Development Association (RSDA) was founded as the Food Security Assistance Project by the German Agro-Action Foundation. The German Government and NGOs in Germany fund it under the aegis of the German Agro-Action Foundation. Its objectives are to promote sustainable development by providing financial and technical assistance to common interest groups in the rural communities. Activities facilitated include agriculture, land management, infrastructure, social welfare and capacity-building. The RSDA operates nation-wide with a field staff and officers over fifty strong (Mashinini 2000: 209).

In the early 1960s Skillshare Africa was launched in Lesotho as the International Volunteer Service. It aims to provide technical assistance for the promotion of sustainable development among rural communities in Lesotho. The expatriate volunteers work in various sectors of development in government, indigenous NGOs and communities at grass-roots level (Mashinini 2000: 212).

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The Unitarian Service Commission of Canada started in Lesotho in the 1970s. It is one of the organisations by means of which the Canadian Government lends assistance to Lesotho. Its headquarters are in Ottawa, Canada. It provides funding to all sectors in the rural areas, especially water affairs, agriculture, sanitation, roads, health and disaster relief. It also gives financial assistance to some indigenous NGOs such as the Machobane Agricultural Development Foundation. It intends transferring its office from Maseru to Pretoria (Mashinini 2000: 216).

The United Nations Volunteers (UNV) commenced in Lesotho in 1972. It mobilises volunteer technical service to Lesotho from members of the United National Organisation under the auspices of the United Nations Development Programme. The volunteers provide professional assistance in all sectors, especially agriculture, health, sanitation, nutrition and transport (Mashinini 2000: 219).

World Vision Lesotho is a branch of World Vision International, whose headquarters are in California. The Lesotho branch was opened in 1987 under its own Director. It employs 112 office and field staff. It provides funding for area-based rural development projects run by communities and also focuses on the children's social welfare. It is funded by governments and benefactors across the world (Mashinini 2000: 221).

Moving on now to the indigenous NGOs, the Adventist Development and Relief Agency started to operate in 1988 as a religious organisation of the Seventh Day Adventist Church. It provides financial and technical assistance as well as social welfare and disaster relief to the needy, especially in the rural areas. Its areas of focus are agriculture, emergency relief, education, sanitation, health and spiritual organisations. It receives funding from humanitarian organisations both in and outside Lesotho. It also generates its own funds through church projects such as schools, a hospital and a series of clinics (Mashinini 2000: 224).

All the churches in Lesotho launched the Christian Council of Lesotho in 1973. Its aim is to provide human development through the provision of material and spiritual aid for the welfare of the Basotho. In the rural areas, the Christian Council of Lesotho provides financial and technical support in the fields of agriculture, rural water supply,

roads, sanitation and health. It also provides emergency relief to needy communities. It is funded by member churches and international organisations and individual benefactors. It employs seventy salaried office and field staff members (Mashinini 2000: 227).

The Maoamafubelu Development Organisation was established in 1986. Its aims are to promote sustainable development through the mobilisation of rural communities in the Pitseng area of the Leribe district by sustainable agricultural projects, improved sanitation, rural water supply and accessible roads. It is funded by the Lesotho government via the ministries of Local Government, Works, Agriculture, Health and Education. Some international NGOs, such as the Catholic Relief Services, which are no longer based in Lesotho, also contributed to the organisation (Mashinini 2000: 229).

The Matsieng Development Trust was founded in 1974. It aims to assist the rural communities in the Matsieng area and partly in the Semonkong area to obtain food and employment through community agricultural projects, land reclamation, cottage industries and education with production. Funding comes from the Anglo-American Corporation in South Africa, the Near East Foundation of the USA and its own income-generating projects (Mashinini 2000: 230). It employs some twenty skilled staff members and volunteers as and when required.

4. Analysis and evaluation

All the NGOs were partly or fully funded by countries in the northern hemisphere and/or other NGOs. Interviews with key members of management in the various NGOs revealed that due to a lack of internal funding and dependence on foreign aid, the foreign funding agencies, international NGOs and donor agencies have significant input and influence in decision-making processes as well as on the priorities and strategies to be adopted by the Lesotho-based NGOs. This limits their spatial and temporal sustainability, except in the case of Africa Network 2000 and the Rural Self-Help Development Association (RSHDA). Moreover, the Northern NGOs themselves select their areas of operation and the specific activities to be funded. Although there is consultation with the rural communities, this gene-

rally amounts to the dissemination of information on decisions already taken either in Maseru or abroad. The rural communities are often expected to participate in the implementation of such decisions and priorities. This promotes only partial participation of the communities and jeopardises the sustainability of the development activities initiated by the NGOs.

In terms of the spatial distribution of the activities of the NGOs in the survey, it was found that there is a bias in favour of the lowlands and the foothills. This unequal distribution tends to exclude the mountain region from the development process and limits the spatial sustainability of the rural development efforts initiated by the NGOs.

Although the NGOs have promoted development activities in the rural areas, all of them were found to be either fully based or to have their headquarters in Maseru. Only World Vision Lesotho, CARE-Lesotho, Lesotho Red Cross, the Christian Council of Lesotho and the Rural Self-Help Development Association had field staff in the rural areas. The location of staff in Maseru, entailing commuting to the rural areas, was found to promote the phenomenon of urban bias and the relative marginalisation of the rural areas in national development (Lipton 1977: 22). Discussions with the NGOs in the survey revealed that they were reluctant to support or establish activities in the mountain region because of its relative inaccessibility and the cost of operations due to poor infrastructure and the snowy conditions in winter months.

In the context of sustainable agriculture, a significant contribution was made to the development of farming techniques and methods by the Machobane Agricultural Development Foundation whose pioneer, mentor and founder, Dr J J Machobane, developed the Machobane Farming System as an indigenous knowledge-based system of sustainable farming. This system was found to have been widely adopted by farmers and promoted by both the NGOs interviewed and the Ministry of Agriculture. However, concurrent field research done on poor, middle-income and rich peasants in the Moleheshoek district (Mashinini & De Villiers 2001: 62) showed that the Machobane Farming System was favoured more by poor peasants because it advocated the use of natural and readily available biological inputs, while the middle-income and rich peasants preferred to

use high-yielding inputs such as chemical fertilizers and hybrid seeds, which are inimical to sustainable agriculture. This study concluded that sustainability depended on extension efforts aimed at changing the attitudes of all farmers, weaning them off high-yielding varieties geared towards Green Revolution (which is often not ecosensitive) and persuading them to adopt the Machobane Farming System, which is conducive to sustainable agriculture.

Sustainable agriculture also depends on the use of a more participatory, field-based extension system than the classic Training and Visit (T & V) system. Some of the NGOs investigated, such as World Vision, CARE and the Rural Self-Help Development Association, were found to have contributed to assisting the Ministry of Agriculture's extension personnel in the field with the implementation of its newly adopted national policy. These NGOs had their own extension agents who lived and worked among the rural communities where they ran projects and thus acted as a supplement to the few extension agents of the Ministry. To this end, the NGOs promoted capacity-building for sustainable agriculture in the country. However, interviews with key personnel in the management of these NGOs revealed that the sustainability of their contribution to extension was threatened by their young field staff's dislike of living in the rural areas due to poor facilities and incentives, resulting in a high turnover of extension agents and a lack of continuity, and producing a culture of false starts in the rural communities where they had agricultural projects. While it is essential that the extension agents change their attitudes towards living and working in rural areas, the NGOs also need to introduce incentives for field staff in order to ensure sustainability in their work.

However, not all NGOs have extension agents in the field. It was found that some of the NGOs relied on the field staff of the Ministry of Agriculture who were present in the areas where they provided development assistance to rural communities. As the NGOs themselves admitted, their own personnel based in Maseru periodically travelled back and forth to project areas to monitor progress. This development practice failed to establish the necessary rapport between the NGOs and the communities. It promotes what Chambers (1983: 37)

calls rural development tourism and undermines co-ordination and sustainability.

Sustainable agriculture also depends on resource pooling and networking among the farmers themselves. This also applies between farmers and other communities and/or donor agencies elsewhere. NGOs such as the Canada Fund, Africa Network 2000, Helvetas, the Lesotho Workcamps Association and MS Lesotho were found to have contributed significantly by assisting rural Basotho communities in resource pooling and networking within Lesotho and with countries in the North. However, the study noted that the sustainability of this resource pooling and networking was lessened by the fact that the initiative was dominated by links with and funding from the North and very little was done to promote linkages and resource pooling among the rural communities themselves. Even the NGOs operating within the country either competed with one another or displayed patronage towards those that they funded, rather than developing strong networking partnerships based on parity and equality.

Moreover, in terms of resource pooling, NGOs such as Helvetas, Africa Network 2000, the Adventist Development and Relief Association, and the Rural Self-help Development Association provided some financial assistance to interest-groups within communities in order to enable them to start sustainable agricultural projects of their own. These loans were meant to be repaid by the individuals and groups so that the money could be used as rotational funds from which to assist other members. However, the sustainability of this financial assistance was undermined by the continued reluctance of some members of the common-interest groups to repay the loans and by the failure of the common-interest groups themselves to levy charges and penalties of exclusion on their own defaulting members to enforce compliance with their own rules of membership. This failure prompted the Rural Self-Help Development Association to levy a special charge on community members for participation in its sustainable agriculture projects and schemes as a mechanism aimed at ensuring accountability on the part of its clientele from the communities. It follows that, although the NGOs operate largely on the principle of humanitarian development assistance, the communities will have to realise that sustainable agriculture cannot be based solely

on donations: it calls for self- and community sacrifice, commitment and accountability. These community characteristics can be developed by committed NGO staff. In Senegal, Bob Rodale played an inspirational role in communities and other development organisations which produced outstanding results (Roberts 2000: 173).

Community participation is crucial to sustainable development. In sustainable agriculture, participatory planning, implementation and evaluation methodologies are the key to sustainability. The survey found that NGOs such as CARE helped in the dissemination and adoption of the Area Team Approach in agricultural development planning. This was initially developed by the Production Through Conservation Project and promoted as part of the national policy of a unified extension approach. World Vision used the Area Development Approach among the communities in which it operated, while Africa Network 2000 provided training on participatory project design and evaluation techniques to its rural clientele. However, these various innovations in participatory methodologies needed to be harmonised so that they do not lead to confusion inimical to sustainable agriculture. In this context civil society leaders can play a crucial role. In Senegal, NGO leadership ensured success and growth in a variety of community development activities (Roberts 2000: 161).

Sustainable agriculture is equally concerned with sustainable land management through conservation. NGOs such as CARE, World Vision, the Lesotho Workcamps Association, the Seventh Adventist Development and Relief Agency, the Christian Council of Lesotho, CARITAS, the Unitarian Service Commission of Canada, Africa Network 2000, Helvetas and the Matsieng Development Trust were involved in the promotion of soil, forestry and water conservation by means of gully reclamation, afforestation and the establishment of water ponds for sustainable agriculture. However, the sustainability of these conservation measures has declined due to the continued expectation of some communities of payment by the NGOs for their participation in the processes of construction and maintenance of the conservation structures and properties. In Matsieng, for instance, a series of dams to arrest soil erosion and harvest water for irrigation by the communities has lain silted up, abandoned and unused for want of community care and independent initiatives for sustainable house-

hold and community development. It follows that the communities have to change their attitude of expecting NGO-driven community development, especially payment, and accept the fact that sustainable development is self- and community-driven in the long term.

Sustainable rural development also includes non-agricultural services and poverty alleviation activities, in order to assist sustainable agriculture to achieve its main objective of sustainable household food supply. In this context, the NGOs investigated were found to have made a significant contribution. NGOs such as CARE, World Vision and the Matsieng Development Trust promoted cottage industries based on weaving, sewing, knitting, and pottery, as well as tie-dyeing, among the rural communities, to generate employment and household income for poverty alleviation. Interviews with the managements of the NGOs revealed that the initial participation rates of the communities in these rural enterprises were high, but that they waned in time. Cottage industries initiated by CARE constituted "white elephant" developments in many rural communities in Lesotho because the communities who were meant to benefit from them had long since ceased to use or protect them from vandalism.

The sustainability of the rural cottage industries established with the support of the NGOs was furthermore hampered by the lack of good local and international markets, which led to their quick collapse due to a lack of financial sustainability. For instance, at the time of the survey, the cottage industry in Matsieng was found to have closed down frequently until a self-help group of local women belonging to the Mabeoana Handicrafts Association rented the factory premises to produce African printed garments such as T-shirts, wall rugs, mats and tablecloths. In December 1999 the Mabeoana Handicrafts Association was, however, winding down its operations because there was no market for its products and it was not financially profitable. The Matsieng Development Trust had renovated the factory premises and property and rented it to an East-Asian private company intending to produce T-shirts for export to the USA from January 2000.

Another facet of sustainable human development is the adequate provision of basic facilities and services such as education, water, health, sanitation and transport. The study found that some of the NGOs investigated, such as the Christian Council of Lesotho, the

Adventist Development and Relief Agency, CARITAS, Lesotho Save the Children, Lesotho Red Cross and World Vision Lesotho, were involved in the provision of education among the disadvantaged. They gave able Basotho children scholarships and also funded the construction needs of education, supporting infrastructure and services such as classrooms and drinking water among rural communities.

NGOs such as Helvetas and the Lesotho Workcamps Association also promoted a rural water supply, rural roads and rural clinics throughout Lesotho. However, the sustainability of these infrastructural services was hampered by a high rate of vandalism on the part of some members of the communities. In some cases the quality of facilities such as water pumps and roads deteriorated drastically for want of maintenance by the communities. Interviews with the managements of the NGOs revealed that divisive national politics at village level, weak local governance, and conflicts over power between the chiefs and village development councils, as well as general apathy and a lack of public-spiritedness were responsible for the absence of community co-operation and commitment to the sustainable management of these public services. The negative attitude displayed by some community members towards the common services constitutes a tragedy and needs to change if sustainable management of the common services provided with the support of the NGOs is to be achieved in rural Lesotho.

Both sustainable agriculture and sustainable human development depend on sustainable capacity-building. The NGOs investigated contributed towards sustainable capacity-building via the mobilisation of short- and long-term technical aid and training to Lesotho. However, the sustainability of the capacity-building was undermined by the fact that the training acquired by many Basotho under the auspices of the NGOs was used to seek greener pastures outside rural development, either in the private sector or across the border in South Africa, exacerbating the rural "brain drain" problem in Lesotho.

4. Conclusion

This paper has argued that NGOs have contributed to sustainable rural development in Lesotho. It has shown that, despite this contribution, the record of sustainability of the rural development efforts initiated under the auspices of the NGOs investigated is not impressive. The paper concludes that, while the NGOs contributed in part, the communities themselves must also bear the blame for the lack of sustainable rural development in Lesotho because they displayed and condoned attitudes which were inimical to sustainable development. Other contributing factors were the top-down approach in the formulation and implementation of the projects, the failure to solicit community participation, and the lack of decentralisation of management.

Success in the NGO sector depends on real capacity to pilot innovative programmes, monitor them closely and re-orient them accordingly. Better programmes often come from an understanding of why past initiatives failed or why current strategies are not working as well as they should (Breslin *et al* 1997: 40). The definitive approach has, however, not been described, because failure of projects remains fairly common in Africa (Binns 1996: 395). So, for instance, with reference to the Nebbi NGO programme in Uganda, Howes (1997: 31) is of the opinion that the performance was creditable, but that most of the advances achieved remain relatively fragile, and probably could not yet be sustained in the absence of a continuing programme.

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